A

GENTLEMAN'S

RELIGION:

WITH THE

GROUNDS AND REASONS OF IT.

BY

THE MOST REVEREND

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PREFACE.

SOME men ſlight Religion, whilſt others corrupt and perplex it with things either falſe or unneceſſary; the latter of which I look upon to be much the cauſe of the former.

Many will not take the pains to read much; and many do not thoroughly conſider, nor well digeſt what they read; which renders their notions confuſed, and themſelves uncertain what to conclude.

I have therefore endeavoured to make ſuch a ſhort and eaſy draught of

of Chriſtianity, and the grounds of it, as every man of a moderate capacity may read without tediouſneſs, and underſtand without difficulty; and which, if it does not wholly ſatisfy him, may yet ſerve to put his thoughts into a method, and himſelf upon ſeeking for farther ſatisfaction.

The firſt part of this ſmall work I put forth ſome time ſince; and, finding that it has not proved altogether unacceptable to men of judgment and moderation, I have been encouraged to finiſh and publiſh the ſecond and third parts alſo.

My deſign is certainly good; and if I have not well performed what I have undertaken, I hope at leaſt that what

what I have here done may move ſome more able and judicious perſon to take the work in hand, and ſupply thoſe defects of which I have been guilty.

A

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PART I.

IN WHICH THE TRUTH OF CHRISTIANITY IN GENERAL IS VINDICATED; ITS SIMPLICITY ASSERTED; AND SOME INTRODUCTORY RULES, FOR THE DISCOVERING OF ITS PARTICULAR DOCTRINES AND PRECEPTS, ARE PROPOSED.

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PART I.

I. SINCE almoſt all men (however different in other opinions and intereſts) have ever agreed in this, that there is a God, to whoſe power all things are ſubject; that the true ſervice and worſhip of God (which is called Religion) ſhall be rewarded with future happineſs; and that the neglect and contempt of Religion ſhall be puniſhed with future miſery; every man ſurely has reaſon to believe thus much at leaſt, that what is ſo generally and firmly believed may be poſ-

 ſibly,

ſibly, nay, and is probably, a truth. And whereſoever there is a poſſibility, and much more where there is a probability, of a great Good on the one hand, and a great Evil on the other; there certainly every man is concerned to enquire into the reality of the thing, that he may not miſs of the one, if it be attainable, nor fall into the other, if it be avoidable. I conclude therefore, that *it is a very great folly for any man to give over ſearching after the true Religion, until he has found it; except he were able to demonſtrate, either, that there is no God, or elſe, that there is no worſhip or ſervice due to him.*

II. In all matters of great and ſerious conſequence, no man that is wiſe will act by chance, and at random, without being able to give ſome reaſon for what he does. For he that does any thing, and knows not why, is more likely to do himſelf hurt than good; becauſe there are more ways to the former than to the latter. Since therefore Religion is a thing of the greateſt moment and importance that can be,

be, I conclude, that *no man ought to chooſe his Religion blindly, and by chance; but that every man ought to have ſome reaſon for what he profeſſes. Whatever Religion,* therefore, *a man is bred up in from his youth, it certainly is very fit for him, when he comes to years of diſcretion, to enquire into the grounds and reaſons of it.* For otherwiſe it is not poſſible for him to know whether he be in the right, or the wrong; in the way to Heaven, or Hell.

III. If there be a God, and if he require any ſervice or worſhip (i. e. any Religion) from us, it is undoubtedly for this end, that it may be a trial of our faithfulneſs and obedience to him. Now, whoſoever has a mind to prove his ſervant, whether he will be faithful and obedient, he will not give him ſuch dark and intricate commands, as ſhall puzzle him to find out the meaning of them; (for how can a ſervant approve himſelf faithful and obedient, if he be uncertain what it is that his maſter requires from him?) but he will ſurely give him ſuch

commands and directions as are eaſy enough to be underſtood, however difficult they may be to be enterprized, or accompliſhed. I conclude therefore, that *all the duties of Religion, which God requires of any man, muſt needs be eaſy enough for him to underſtand, however hard they may be to be practiſed.* For otherwiſe Religion would be a trial rather of a man's wit and cunning, than of his faithfulneſs and obedience. And therefore alſo I cannot but conclude, that *moſt*, if not all the *controverſies about Religion*, which at this day diſtract the world, *do not proceed from any difficulty in or about the determination of all things neceſſary in Religion itſelf*; *but partly from the pride of ſome learned men*, who have loved to ſtart new and difficult queſtions, and to impoſe their private ſentiments upon the world, that they might be admired for their wit and ſubtilty; *partly from the covetouſneſs and ambition of ſome*, whether learned or unlearned, who have found that their worldly intereſt will be better ſerved by ſome doctrines (no matter how falſe and precarious) than by

by others; *and partly from the prejudice of moſt men*, who are apt, with great zeal and eagerneſs, to contend for all thoſe things which, from their childhood, they have been taught to have a reverence for. And I farther conclude, that *whoſoever has a ſincere deſire to embrace true Religion, muſt lay aſide pride, ambition, covetouſneſs, and prejudice*, which would miſguide him; *and follow his ſober and unprejudicate reaſon*, which will ever lead him in the right way.

IV. There are different ſorts, or rather degrees, of aſſurance, which men have concerning things. Some things are evident of themſelves, without any proof; ſome things we are aſſured of, by the teſtimony of our ſenſes; ſome things we receive as truths, becauſe we find them to follow from other truths already received; and ſome things we believe only upon the teſtimony of others. Moreover, ſome things we are perſuaded of, without any doubt or diffidence; whereas other things do ſeem at beſt to be but likely or proba-

ble, and that too in a different degree, according as their evidence is ſtronger or weaker. Now every ſober man, where he has certain evidence of a thing, there he acts with aſſurance; where the matter is but probable, there he proceeds with caution: but where a man is under a neceſſity of doing one way or other, and where the matter appears doubtful on both ſides, there it becomes him to weigh the reaſons on both parts with due conſideration; and according as he finds the greater probability to be on the one hand rather than the other, ſo to ſquare his actions accordingly. Since therefore every man muſt neceſſarily either live religiouſly, or not live religiouſly; I conclude, that, *if, upon a ſerious conſideration of the matter, there appear to be more probable reaſons and arguments for Religion than againſt it, every wiſe and ſober man muſt embrace Religion.* This I ſay, not but that I think there are even demonſtrative arguments for Religion, and not ſo much as one probable one againſt it: but becauſe that which to me ſeems demon-

demonſtrative, to another may appear but probable, I thought it fit to note, that every man in point of common prudence is obliged to follow Religion, if it does but appear more likely and probable to him than Irreligion.

V. Whether it is poſſible for any agent to produce a new being purely out of nothing, may with much ſhew of reaſon be doubted; as alſo, whether mere matter alone, without any other agent or efficient cauſe, can ever be able to work itſelf into any different ſpecies or forms. But this appears as certain as any thing can be, that where there is neither any agent or efficient cauſe to work, nor any matter or ſubject to be wrought upon, there it is utterly impoſſible for any thing ever to be produced into being. Since therefore I find that there are many things which actually have a being and exiſtence, I conclude, that *of abſolute neceſſity there muſt be ſomething or other which has been from all eternity, and never had a beginning*. For otherwiſe, if we ſuppoſe that ever there

was a time when nothing at all did exiſt, it follows, from what has been ſaid, that it would be utterly impoſſible that any thing ever ſhould be produced into exiſtence.

VI. Since of neceſſity we muſt acknowledge ſomething to have been eternal, I cannot but conclude, that *the eternity of ſuch a being as God is deſcribed to be, is much more probable and fit to be believed, than the eternity of ſuch a being as I ſee this world to be.* For when I go about to conceive a notion of the eternity of the world, (I mean in the like poſture that now it is in,) there do occur to my mind ſuch difficulties, or rather impoſſibilities, as I think no man can digeſt. For he that affirms the world, as now it ſtands, to have been eternal, muſt of neceſſity grant, that there has been an eternal ſucceſſion of men, beaſts, and vegetables, and that to a number actually infinite: for if the number be not infinite, how can the ſucceſſion have been eternal? And yet a number actually infinite to me appears

appears to be a plain contradiction. For that which is infinite cannot be made bigger; whereas there is no number but may be made bigger by the addition of units. Again, if any one ſhall affirm, that an infinite number is no contradiction; and that there has been a ſucceſſion of ſuch a number of beings in the world; then thus I argue, that if there has been a ſucceſſion of an infinite number of men, beaſts, &c. then, by a parity of reaſon, there has been alſo a ſucceſſion of an infinite number of days and nights; and if ſo, then likewiſe of an infinite number of years too; (for if the number of years can be limited, ſo can that of days too, ſince every year contains juſt ſuch a certain number of days.) Now this I ſuppoſe muſt be granted me, that infinite numbers are equal; (for if one number be leſs than another, how can it be infinite?) and if ſo, then it muſt follow, that in the eternity of the world the number of years is equal to the number of days, which is abſurd; becauſe every year contains in itſelf a number of 365 days. Theſe difficulties,

or

or rather impoſſibilities, I ſay, do make the notion of the world's eternity (I mean as the world now is) to appear to me as an abſurd and unreaſonable ſuppoſition. But then as to God, although I confeſs it to be difficult, and perhaps impoſſible, for man to comprehend the manner, how he is, or can be, eternal without beginning; yet ſince the thing itſelf is ſo uncontrollably evident that ſomething is ſo eternal, (though the manner how is to me incomprehenſible,) I find no other ſcruple or difficulty in admitting the eternity of God. For though it ſeems contrary to all reaſon to affirm an eternal ſucceſſion of divers things, one after another, without a beginning; yet I can find no manner of repugnancy in maintaining that there is one immutable being (i. e. God) which never began to be.

VII. Whether the matter, of which this viſible world is framed, has exiſted from all eternity; or whether it were produced out of nothing by the almighty power of God; is a queſtion which reaſon alone,

alone, I think, can never determine. But when I contemplate and conſider the great variety, order, beauty, and uſefulneſs, which do evidently appear in all the parts of the world, as they are placed together, and anſwer one another; I cannot but conclude, that *the whole world, and all its parts, are contrived, framed, and faſhioned, by a wiſe and powerful Being, whom we call God:* as when I ſee a curious clock or engine, I preſently conclude, that it was made and contrived by ſome artiſt; and ſhould laugh at that man who would offer to ſay, that it was formed and faſhioned only by chance.

VIII. That miracles (i. e. wonderful works, ſurpaſſing the ordinary courſe of nature and power of art,) have been wrought for confirmation of the truth of Religion, is a thing that I ſhall take for granted at preſent, becauſe it will appear to be proved beyond any juſt exception in the ſequel of this diſcourſe; and from thence I think I may moſt reaſonably conclude, that *there is a Being ſuperior to nature, who can command*

mand and control it as he pleaſes, i. e. in other terms, that *there is a God*.

IX. The hiſtories of all ages, and travellers into all countries, do univerſally concur in this teſtimony, that there is no nation or people, whether learned or unlearned, but what do own the being of a God. And thoſe few perſons who have preſumed to deny it, have ever been looked on as prodigies and monſters of mankind. Furthermore, even thoſe few who have denied the being of God, have ever been men of ſuch debauched and profligate lives, that we have great reaſon to believe, that they firſt have wiſhed, that there might be no God to puniſh them; and then, without any other ground or reaſon, have believed, or rather pretended to believe, what they have wiſhed. For it is almoſt ever obſerved, that when debauched and atheiſtical perſons do draw near to death, they do either renounce their atheiſm, own the being of a God, and make ſupplication to him; or at leaſt have their minds poſſeſſed with ſuch doubts and

and fears, as plainly ſhew that they have ſtill a ſtrong ſuſpicion that there likely may be a God, for ought they know, who will call them to an account for all their wickedneſs. Since then all ſorts of men, both learned and unlearned, and all nations of men, both civil and barbarous, have always owned the being of a God; ſince his being has never been denied but by very few indeed; ſince that denial has rather proceeded from their wiſhes and deſires, than from their reaſon and underſtanding; and laſtly, ſince they have not been able wholly to extinguiſh the belief of a God out of their minds, although they have earneſtly endeavoured it; I conclude, that *the belief of a God, in man, is neither the effect of chance*, becauſe it is univerſal, *nor of ignorance*, becauſe it poſſeſſes the moſt learned, *nor of ſtate policy*, becauſe it is received among the moſt barbarous and uncivilized people; but that *there is a God, who has made all men, and has (as a token of his work) ſtamped and engraved* this *his mark and character upon them.*

X. There

X. There is no man of common ſenſe, who builds a convenient and goodly ſtructure, but he takes care likewiſe to keep it in good order and repair, after it is built. And there is no fabrick but, in tract of time, will viſibly decay, if conſtant care be not taken of it. Since therefore God has erected and framed this goodly ſtructure of the world; and ſince in ſo long a time there is no manner of decay to be found in it, (as is abundantly proved by Hakewill, in his apology on this ſubject,) I conclude, that *God not only made this world by his power, but alſo governs it by his providence.* And for the only objection, which ſeems to be of any force againſt God's providence, namely, that wicked men do often thrive and proſper, whilſt good and virtuous men are oppreſſed with miſery; it is moſt eaſily and naturally ſolved, by ſuppoſing, (what ſhall anon be proved) that there are abundant rewards for good men, and ſufficient puniſhments for the wicked, to be diſtributed in a life which is to come; which will bring all things to be equal at the laſt.

XI. Every

XI. Every parent who begets and brings up a child, every maſter who feeds and pays a ſervant, every prince who governs and protects his ſubjects, and every benefactor who does any act of kindneſs for another, may very reaſonably, and do always, expect a return of love, obedience, and gratitude, in due proportion to the benefits received from them. Since then God is more than a parent to us, for he made us and our parents too; ſince he is ſo kind a maſter, who gives us our food, and all the conveniencies of life; ſince he governs and protects us, by his overruling Providence, more effectually than any earthly prince does his ſubjects; and laſtly, ſince he is our greateſt and ſupreme benefactor, who has given us all the good which we poſſeſs and enjoy; I cannot but conclude, that *he expects a return of love, obedience, and gratitude from us*, (I will not ſay proportionable to the benefits received from him, for that, perhaps, may exceed our ability; but) *proportionable unto our ability or capacity*.

XII. That

XII. That God is wiſe and powerful, I gather from his work, which I contemplate in the viſible world. And from thence I conclude, that *he will ſufficiently puniſh thoſe perſons who deſpiſe him, ſo far as not to love, thank, and obey him, according as he expects and requires from them.* That he is alſo good and gracious, I gather from thoſe good things which he has beſtowed upon us, relating both to our bodies and minds. And from thence I conclude, that *he will abundantly reward all thoſe perſons who take care to pay him that love, gratitude, and obedience, which he expects.*

XIII. That theſe rewards and puniſhments are not finally diſtributed in this life is very evident; becauſe we often ſee men that are notoriouſly wicked, enjoy all the pleaſures, and others, that are conſpicuouſly virtuous, undergo almoſt all the calamities of this world, even unto their very graves. I conclude therefore, that *there is another life after this, in which theſe rewards and puniſhments ſhall be duly diſtributed.*

XIV.

XIV. When a man is once convinced that there is a God, to whom there is a ſervice due; and that there are rewards and puniſhments to be diſpenſed to all men, according as they have performed or neglected that ſervice; the grand enquiry that every man is concerned to make, is, what he muſt do to avoid theſe puniſhments, and to be made partaker of theſe rewards. And here I think I may moſt eaſily and naturally make theſe following concluſions, viz. 1. *He who does what God requires from him ſhall not be puniſhed, but rewarded.* 2. *God requires from every man that he ſhould uſe his honeſt endeavour, by all means, to know and underſtand his will as perfectly as he can.* For this is but reaſon for every maſter to expect from his ſervant, much more for ſuch a maſter as God. 3. *If a man does his heartieſt and beſt endeavour, firſt to know, and then to perform, the will of God, God will require no more from him.* For to me it ſeems utterly inconſiſtent with the wiſdom of God to expect, and with his goodneſs to require, any more from a man than

what he is able to perform; i. e. any more than his beſt and moſt hearty endeavours.

XV. There are, in the general, but two ways of finding out and knowing the will of God. The one is by the uſe of our natural reaſon and underſtanding; the other is by attending to that revelation which God has made of his will to the world. Here then I conclude, *I muſt make it my buſineſs, firſt to enquire into the truth and reality of this revelation; and then, to make uſe of that, and my reaſon together, in order to find out what is God's will.*

XVI. That there was ſuch a perſon as Jeſus of Nazareth, in Galilee, in the time of Tiberius Cæſar, the Roman emperor; that he had a company of poor men for his diſciples; that he and his diſciples went about the country of Judea, teaching and preaching; that he was put to death upon the croſs, after the Roman manner, under Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor of Judea; that, after his death, his

his diſciples went about into all, or moſt parts of the then known world, teaching and preaching that this Jeſus was the Chriſt, the Son of God, and Saviour of the world, and that he was riſen from the dead, and gone into heaven; that in a few years they converted a very great number of people, in all places, to this belief; that the profeſſors of this belief were called Chriſtians; that they were moſt cruelly perſecuted, and many thouſands of them put to death, and that with moſt exquiſite torments, for no other reaſon, but becauſe they were Chriſtians; that theſe perſecutions were ſeveral times renewed againſt them, for the ſpace of about three hundred years; and yet, for all this, that the number of Chriſtians daily increaſed, and that not only ideots and unlearned men, but great ſcholars and philoſophers were converted to Chriſtianity, even in the times of perſecution—all this, being merely matter of fact, was never yet denied by the greateſt enemies of the Chriſtian Religion. And, indeed, theſe things are ſo abundantly teſtified by the

hiſtories, and other writings of thoſe times; and have been ſo generally received for truth, as well by the oppoſers as believers of Chriſtianity, by a conſtant, univerſal, and uninterrupted tradition from thoſe days even unto this time, that a man may as well deny the truth of any, or of all, the hiſtories of the world, as of this. Now, ſince all men generally have a ſtrong inclination to retain and ſtick to that Religion (whatever it be) in which both they and their fathers have been brought up; and no leſs an averſion to all cauſeleſs innovations in matters of Religion; moreover, ſince all men, without exception, who are in their wits, have naturally a moſt earneſt deſire to preſerve their lives as long as they can, and to keep themſelves free from pain and trouble; I think I may reaſonably conclude, that *there muſt have been ſome extraordinary ſtrong, and even irreſiſtible motive, which could prevail upon ſuch multitudes of people to forſake theirs and their anceſtors old Religion, and to embrace Chriſtianity*, which then had but newly appeared in the world, and which,

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in thoſe days, did ſeldom fail to involve its proſelytes in moſt grievous troubles and perſecutions.

XVII. That this motive could not be the hopes of any profit or advantage in this life, is moſt evident, becauſe Chriſtianity was in thoſe days moſt commonly perſecuted, even unto death. It muſt therefore of neceſſity be the hopes of ſome benefit or happineſs, which ſhould accrue to them after this life was at an end. And this benefit or happineſs could not ſeem ſmall and inconſiderable to them; nor could the hope which they conceived of it be weak, or doubtful: for there is ſcarce any man, or ever was, in the world, who would run himſelf into certain miſery and perſecution, even to the loſing of his life, only upon a *weak* and *doubtful* hope of ſome *ſmall* and *inconſiderable* benefit or happineſs to be enjoyed in a life to come. I conclude therefore, that *the primitive Chriſtians were undoubtingly poſſeſſed with a ſtrong belief, and moſt firm perſuaſion, that whoſoever ſhould truly em-*

brace, profeſs, and live according to the Chriſtian Religion in this life, was certainly to be made partaker of ſome great and ineſtimable happineſs in the life to come.

XVIII. That this belief and perſuaſion did not proceed from any frenzy, or madneſs, (which ſometimes poſſeſſes men with very ſtrong imaginations,) is very evident; both becauſe there was ſuch a multitude of them, who exactly agreed in the ſame ſentiments; and alſo, becauſe it appears, both from the writings and actions of the primitive Chriſtians, that they were men of reaſon and ſobriety, and ſome of them perſons of great learning. As evident alſo it is, that it could not proceed from the force of any argument, drawn from the principles of bare natural reaſon, without revelation. For, what man in his wits, without pretending ſome revelation from heaven, could ever be perſuaded, that the embracing of the Religion taught by ſuch a particular perſon, more than another, would make him happy in the life to come? I conclude therefore, that *the diſciples of Jeſus,*

ſus, who preached Chriſtianity abroad in the world, did convince and ſatisfy their proſelytes, that it was revealed by God from heaven, that whoſoever would believe on Jeſus, and receive, and live according to, his Religion, ſhould be made very happy in the next life.

The main argument which the firſt preachers of Chriſtianity made uſe of, to convince the world that this was a divine revelation, was this, viz. becauſe that Jeſus, in his life-time, did perform ſuch and ſo many miracles, and wonderful works, as ſufficiently ſhewed that he had his commiſſion and power from God; and becauſe his diſciples, (whom he had appointed to teach his Religion to the world,) for many years after his death, did likewiſe continue to work many miracles in the name of Jeſus; which ſhewed that God was with them in what they did and taught. The things by them alleged to have been performed by Jeſus, were ſuch as theſe; that he healed all manner of diſeaſes and diſtempers with a touch, or barely with a

word ſpeaking; that he gave ſight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, ſpeech to the dumb, and ſtrength and agility to the lame and maimed; that he raiſed ſeveral perſons from the dead; and that he himſelf aroſe from the dead, after he had been crucified, and a ſpear thruſt into his vitals, and had lain dead in a ſepulchre unto the third day; and laſtly, that, after his reſurrection, having ſeveral times appeared to his diſciples, and converſed with them for the ſpace of forty days, he was at laſt, openly, and in their ſight, taken up alive into heaven. The things alleged to have been done by his diſciples, were, the healing the ſick, the lame, the maimed, &c. and, in a particular manner, their ſpeaking all languages, although they never had learned them. That all theſe things were pretended by the firſt preachers of Chriſtianity, is confeſſed on all hands. And, undoubtedly, they muſt needs, at leaſt, *pretend* ſomething that was very extraordinary, or elſe they never could have converted ſuch vaſt multitudes, under ſo many diſadvantages as they and their Religion laboured.

laboured. That theſe things were not only pretended, but really and actually performed, is, to my opinion, uncontrollably evinced from the teſtimony of the diſciples themſelves, who declared theſe things for truth unto the world; who could not themſelves be deceived in thoſe matters of fact, of which they pretended to have been eye-witneſſes; who never would go about to impoſe a lie upon the world, by which they could propoſe to themſelves no manner of advantage in this life, nor, if it were a lie, in the life to come; who never would have expoſed themſelves to poverty, to racks, to gibbets, to fire and faggot, in a word, to all ſorts of torments and deaths, only for the ſake of a fruitleſs and unprofitable fable; who being men of unblameable lives, for their morality, had, doubtleſs, more honeſty and integrity, than to affirm thoſe things for certain truths, which they muſt needs know to be mere inventions; who were too many in number, and too void of craft and guile, to combine together in framing a falſe ſtory, and none of them ever

ever to betray or diſcover the cheat; who could never hope to impoſe the belief of ſuch a ſtory upon a curious and inquiſitive age, (ſuch as that was wherein they lived,) if it had been falſe, and therefore would certainly never have attempted it, if they had not known it to have been true; and laſtly, who, inſtead of convincing ſuch multitudes as they did, muſt needs have been palpably diſcovered, and expoſed to the world for a company of lewd cheats and impoſtors, in pretending that ſuch and ſuch things were done in the land of Judea and Jeruſalem, (and done openly too, in the face of the world,) when it was ſo eaſy a matter to go or ſend to the place, to make enquiry, and ſo to find out the cheat, if a cheat it had been. But that theſe ſame miracles and wonderful works did far ſurpaſs both the courſe of nature, and the power of art, is very evident; that they were not performed by the aſſiſtance of any wicked ſpirit, does ſufficiently appear; becauſe the very intent and deſign of them was to propagate a doctrine in the world, which by all muſt be allowed to teach the

the pureſt and moſt ſtrict morality; to which it cannot be imagined, that any impure and evil ſpirit would contribute any help. It remains therefore, that theſe things muſt needs have been performed, either by the immediate power and aſſiſtance of God, who is both the framer and controller of nature, or, which is the ſame thing in effect, by the mediation and miniſtry of good ſpirits, who always act obediently to his will. So that, whether mediately or immediately, it is God who is to be looked upon as the original and author of all thoſe wonderful things which were done by Jeſus and his diſciples. Now then, ſince God did interpoſe his power, to work ſuch ſtrange and ſtupendous things, for the propagation and confirmation of that doctrine which was taught by Jeſus and his diſciples; this, I think, is a ſufficient demonſtration, that their doctrine was certainly true. For who can imagine that God ſhould make uſe of his extraordinary power, only to cheat and deceive the world into the belief of a lie? I conclude therefore, that *the primitive Chriſtians*

tians had ſufficient reaſon to believe, that it was revealed by God from heaven, that whoſoever would believe on Jeſus, and receive, and live according to, his Religion, ſhould be made very happy in the next life; this very thing being the grand point of doctrine, which Jeſus and his diſciples taught and preached to the world. And if we are ſure that the primitive Chriſtians had reaſon ſufficient to believe this, from hence it follows, that *we have ſufficient reaſon to believe it alſo.*

XX. But Jeſus himſelf being long ſince aſcended into heaven, and his diſciples, who firſt preached the Goſpel, departed out of the world; here, *I think, it is neceſſary to enquire, to whom, or to what I muſt apply myſelf, that* (amidſt the ſeveral parties in the world, who all call themſelves true and orthodox Chriſtians, each condemning all others but themſelves,) *I may be truly and ſurely informed what is the true and genuine religion or doctrine of Jeſus, which I ought to receive, and live according to, in order to my future happineſs.*

neſs. For, if I do not this, I muſt either reject the doctrine of Jeſus, and ſo loſe my future happineſs; or elſe take it altogether upon truſt, and by chance, and then it is odds but I light upon the wrong, and muſt needs run a very great hazard. And though he who is in a miſtake, and cannot tell how to help it, will, doubtleſs, find an eaſy pardon from God; yet he who falls into error for want of moderate care and diligence to find out the truth, has, I think, no pretence either to pardon, or ſo much as to pity.

XXI. The Roman Catholics tell me, that I muſt apply myſelf to the Church. This Church they define to be, that ſociety of perſons who profeſs faith in Jeſus Chriſt, and live in ſubjection to, and communion with, the Pope, or Biſhop of Rome. This Church, they ſay, is infallible, and not only does not, but cannot, err in any doctrine of Religion. Go then, ſay they, to this Church, and receive the doctrine which ſhe teaches; and there you have, certainly and infallibly, the true and pure

doctrine

doctrine of Jeſus Chriſt. But I cannot give my aſſent to follow this their direction, becauſe I find ſuch great difficulties in my way as, I think, are inſuperable; at leaſt, I am ſure, ſuch as I am not able to overcome. For, firſt, although it may be a certain truth, that there ſhall always be a Church, that is to ſay, a company of people, ſomewhere or other, profeſſing the true Chriſtian Religion, as long as the world ſhall laſt; yet what ſolid proof can be brought, that this particular ſociety of men, who live in communion with the Pope, or Biſhop of Rome, are alone the true Church, and ſhall always keep and maintain amongſt them the true and uncorrupt doctrine of Jeſus Chriſt? This matter being a queſtion of revelation, and poſitive inſtitution, is incapable of being proved by any argument drawn from natural reaſon. And, as for the texts of Scripture which they allege, it is even ridiculous to think, that any ſober and unprejudiced perſon ſhould be convinced by them; (as will evidently appear to any one, who impartially reads what the Romiſh and Pro-

Proteſtant divines have written on this controverſy:) for there are none of thoſe texts but are fairly and naturally capable of another interpretation, and muſt be very much ſtrained and wreſted, to make them countenance the Romiſh doctrine. Beſides that, the divines of the Church of Rome do generally teach, that no man can be ſure of the authority or ſenſe of any text of Scripture, (eſpecially if it appear to be any way doubtful,) except he receives the propoſal and interpretation thereof from this their Church, which they ſay is infallible. So that a man muſt of neceſſity believe the infallibility of their Church, before he can any way be ſure of the credit, or even of the ſenſe, of thoſe texts of Scripture which they bring to prove it. And then, what need is there of Scripture arguments, to prove a thing which muſt be acknowledged, before the arguments can have any force, or even be as much as certainly underſtood? And if they tell me, that the Fathers and ancient Chriſtian writers do teſtify thus much of the Church of Rome, I can only ſay, that

that the Proteſtant divines (who ſeem to me to be men of as much learning and integrity as the Romiſh,) do declare, that it is far otherwiſe. Nor have I ſkill enough in language and antiquity, to take upon me to judge of this diſpute. Neither do I underſtand, by what authority the writings of thoſe perſons, who are acknowledged to have been ſubject to errors, ſhould be obtruded on me as a rule of my faith, or as a ſufficient argument to determine my aſſent in ſo weighty a matter. Secondly, ſuppoſing, but not granting, that in the Church of Rome the true and pure doctrine of Jeſus Chriſt was preſerved; yet ſtill it is granted, that particular and private men, who live in the viſible communion of that Church, may teach falſe and corrupt doctrine. Here then I demand, how ſhall I certainly diſtinguiſh the doctrine of the Church, from the opinions of private men? And how ſhall I certainly know what is the true meaning of the Church's doctrine? They of the Church of Rome are not agreed who it is, that has authority to declare and expound the doc-

trine

trine of their Church; whether it be the Pope, or a general council, or neither alone, but both together. Or if they were unanimous in this point, yet how ſhall I know whether ſuch a particular perſon, who poſſeſſes the chair, be a true and lawful Pope; or ſuch a particular aſſembly, a true and lawful general council? Or, ſuppoſe they could ſatisfy me in this demand, yet there is no council now ſitting, nor, if there were, could I go to them, or to the Pope, to receive inſtruction; nor can the Pope, or a council, be at leiſure to ſatisfy the demands of every private enquirer. How then can I be ſure that this or that particular perſon does both rightly underſtand, and faithfully propoſe the doctrine of the Church to me? Eſpecially, ſince there have been, and ſtill are, eminent members of the Church of Rome, who have accuſed each other of corrupt doctrine, and even of hereſy itſelf. But thirdly and laſtly, there do appear to me to be much ſtronger arguments to prove that the Church of Rome has actually erred, and corrupted the doctrine of Jeſus

Chriſt, (in the caſe of tranſubſtantiation, and ſome other her tenets,) than any that can be brought, to prove her to be infallible. And until I can be otherwiſe convinced, I cannot but conclude, that *to follow the guidance of the Roman Church, is not the way to embrace the true and pure doctrine of Jeſus.*

XXII. Some there are who tell me, that, to find out the true and genuine doctrine of Jeſus, I muſt have recourſe to the tradition of the Church. And thus they ſet forth the matter. Firſt, they ſuppoſe that the true and genuine doctrine of Jeſus was undoubtedly taught by his apoſtles and firſt diſciples. Secondly, that if any one did, or ſhould have gone about to ſpread any falſe or ſpurious doctrine, whilſt theſe apoſtles and diſciples were yet alive, they who were ſent on purpoſe, by Jeſus, to preach his doctrine, and were owned and ſubmitted to accordingly by all Chriſtian Churches, both could and would immediately convince all Churches of the falſeneſs and ſpurioufneſs of ſuch pre-

pretended doctrine. Thirdly, that the doctrine of Jeſus being in all Churches publicly and conſtantly taught and preached, every ſucceeding age and generation muſt needs know, and could not poſſibly be ignorant, what their fathers and immediate predeceſſors owned and taught as ſuch. Fourthly, that therefore, if, at any time whatſoever, any new or ſpurious doctrine was or ſhould be vented, by any perſon or perſons, as the doctrine of Jeſus, all Chriſtians muſt preſently know that this was none of his doctrine, becauſe it was not taught them as ſuch by their immediate predeceſſors. Fifthly, that therefore it is impoſſible that any new and ſpurious doctrine could ever be broached in the world, as a part of the doctrine of Jeſus, but it muſt needs meet with great oppoſition: for all Chriſtians do maintain, that it is a ſin to teach, or knowingly to own, any thing as the doctrine of Jeſus, which is not really ſo. Sixthly, that however ſome men, out of pride or intereſt, may own and contend for any ſuch novel doctrines; yet it is impoſſible that any ſuch

doctrine ſhould ever come to be univerſally received by the whole Church; except we could ſuppoſe, either that the whole Church ſhould join together to involve themſelves and their poſterity for ever in a ſin; or elſe, that a few men, who firſt ſhould vent an opinion, could ſo impoſe upon the whole world, as to make them believe, that what they all muſt know to be a new and upſtart thing (becauſe they received it not from their fathers and predeceſſors) was a part of the ancient doctrine of Jeſus, which was all along, from hand to hand, delivered down to them: both which things are abſurd to conceive or imagine. And, laſtly, that no part of the doctrine of Jeſus, once delivered, could ever be obliterated, or wholly forgot in the world; becauſe every age of Chriſtians, from the very firſt, who undoubtedly received the whole and entire doctrine of Jeſus, knew themſelves to be indiſpenſibly obliged, both by God's command, and alſo by that love and charity which they owed to their poſterity, to teach the ſame full and entire doctrine which

which they received, unto their children, and thoſe who were to come after them. Go therefore to the Church, (that is, to the Church of Rome, ſay the Papiſts; to the Univerſal Church, i. e. to all Chriſtians, ſay ſome Proteſtants,) and ſee what are the doctrines, which are and have been univerſally maintained; of whoſe beginning no other account can be given, but that Jeſus and his apoſtles taught them to the world: and there you have the entire and uncorrupted doctrine of Jeſus. But to this I anſwer, that indeed where there is an univerſal, or a very large and general, tradition concerning any thing; and where, from the nature of the thing itſelf, it appears to be highly rational and probable, that there is not, or could not be, any error or miſtake in the matter; in ſuch a caſe as this, no man, I think, but an obſtinate ſceptic, will offer to withſtand the evidence of ſuch a tradition. But, let a tradition be ever ſo general, or even univerſal; yet, if it can be ſhewn, that there is not only a poſſibility, but alſo a fair likelihood and probability, that there may

be a miſtake in the buſineſs; then, I think, no man can juſtly be blamed, if he refuſes or ſuſpends his aſſent, until the teſtimony of ſuch a tradition be cleared and vindicated from thoſe rational prejudices and exceptions which may lie againſt it. Now, if it were ſo, that all errors and miſtakes did ever immediately appear in their perfect form, and full growth, at their very beginning; then it were moſt rational to conclude, that all men muſt needs take notice of their firſt appearance; and, conſequently, that, in all likelihood, any ſuch error muſt needs meet with many more opponents than abettors. But, on the contrary, it may well be ſuppoſed, that errors may have ſprung up in the world, from ſuch ſmall beginnings, and by ſuch ſlow and unperceivable degrees, that, after ſome ages, it may be impoſſible for a man to diſcover them to be errors, except he has ſome other rule, beſides tradition, to try them by, viz. either the rule of common reaſon, or ſome ancient or unaltered writing. As for example; is it not rational to conceive, that, in the firſt

ages

ages of Chriſtianity, they who preached and wrote popular diſcourſes, might, very innocently, and to good purpoſe, make uſe of rhetorical flights, and figurative expreſſions, to ſtrike the fancies, and move the affections of the people to virtue and piety? And is it not likely enough, that thoſe, who came after them, might not only ſtrive to imitate, but alſo to outdo them, in bolder flights, and more ſtrained ſchemes of expreſſion? And is it not alſo probable enough, that, in long proceſs of time, ignorance, generally overſpreading the face of the world, and being joined with a profound veneration for thoſe ancient preachers and writers, might begin to interpret ſome of theſe rhetorical and figurative expreſſions in a literal and logical ſenſe; and then conceive, that ſuch their interpretations were really and truly the ancient doctrines delivered down to them? Eſpecially if we conſider, that there may have been ſome men of great power and repute in the world, who might have taken a pride and delight, or whoſe intereſt it might have been, to amuſe

the people with myſterious notions and fancies, and to keep them ignorant of the truth. And thus it appears to be not only poſſible, but alſo probable enough, that errors and miſtakes, as to the ancient doctrine of Jeſus, might come to be generally received, without any conſiderable or notorious oppoſition given to them; or that ſuch oppoſition might ſoon be ſuppreſſed and overruled by the power and reputation of ſuch prevailing men. From all which I cannot but conclude, that *though the general tradition or teſtimony of the Church may be a good help; yet it may not always be a certain rule, to lead me to the entire and unaltered doctrine of Jeſus.*

XXIII. Others there are, who tell me, that, to find out the true and entire doctrine of Jeſus, I muſt apply myſelf to the Holy Scripture; that is to ſay, to the books commonly called the Old and the New Teſtament. And becauſe I look upon this to be the right way, I ſhall briefly and plainly deliver my thoughts in relation to theſe books. And firſt, of the

the New Teſtament: That the New Teſtament, as it was extant in the Greek tongue, has been ever univerſally owned by all Chriſtians, as containing a true (though ſome deny it to be a full) account of the life and doctrine of Jeſus, is a thing ſo notorious, and ſo univerſally acknowledged, that I cannot find the leaſt ground or reaſon to queſtion it. Now the hiſtory and doctrine of Jeſus being ſo well known unto the firſt Chriſtians, by the preaching of the apoſtles and diſciples; and they being ſo ready, upon all occaſions, to lay down their lives for the truth of Chriſtianity; it cannot be imagined, that ever they would ſo readily and univerſally receive and own ſuch a book, if it had contained any thing in it, which was diſſonant from that doctrine which they had received. It is confeſſed, indeed, that ſome of thoſe books, which make up the volume of the New Teſtament, (that is to ſay, the Epiſtle to the Hebrews, that of St. James, the ſecond of St. Peter, that of St. Jude, the ſecond and third of St. John, and the Revelations,)

tions,) were not ſo ſoon and ſo univerſally received, throughout the Chriſtian Church, as the reſt of the books were. The reaſon of which apparently was not, that theſe books contained any thing in them contrary to what was delivered in the other books of the New Teſtament, (for he that reads the whole, will plainly find, that there is a very complete agreement between them; the only ſeeming diſcord, of St. Paul's juſtification by faith, and St. James's juſtification by works, being exactly and fully reconciled, by conſidering, that St. Paul means no other faith, but ſuch as worketh by love, Gal. v. 6; and St. James, no other works, but ſuch as proceed from faith, Jam. ii. 22.) but becauſe it was not at firſt univerſally known, who were the authors of them. Which abundantly ſhews the care and caution of the Chriſtian Church, in not being haſty to receive and admit any books, as authentic records of their doctrine, without very good warrant for ſo doing. And therefore, ſince theſe ſame books were, in a very little time after, re-

received, and owned to be of equal authority with the reſt of the New Teſtament; I cannot but from thence conclude, that thoſe Churches, which at the firſt doubted concerning thoſe books, did ſoon receive moſt full and ample ſatisfaction in that matter, from thoſe who had before received them. I conclude therefore, that *the book of the New Teſtament, as it was extant in the primitive times, in the Greek tongue, did contain a true account of the doctrine of Jeſus.*

XXIV. That innumerable copies of the New Teſtament were, in a very little time, diſperſed through all places where Chriſtianity was planted; that it has been, at different times, and in very diſtant places, tranſlated into all (or almoſt all) languages; and that copies, both of the original, and many of the ſeveral tranſlations, have been preſerved with much care, in a great many diſtant parts of the world, is allowed by all, and denied by none. From whence I think we may gather, firſt, that *where the generality of the Greek copies*

pies of the New Teſtament do agree in the very ſame words, there we have, undoubtedly, the true and authentic words of the New Teſtament. For although ſome miſtakes might creep into ſome copies, either through the wickedneſs or negligence of ſome particular men; yet, where ſo many copies of a book have been ſo carefully preſerved, and in ſuch diſtant parts of the world, it is not to be imagined, that the ſelf-ſame error, in any expreſſion, ſhould ever be propagated through the generality of them. Secondly, that *where the words or expreſſions of divers Greek copies do differ one from another; yet, if the ſenſe and meaning be exactly the ſame in all, or almoſt all, there we have certainly the true ſenſe and meaning of the New Teſtament.* For it is eaſy to apprehend, that a tranſcriber might, by a ſmall miſtake, put one word or expreſſion of the ſame ſignification, inſtead of another: but that the ſame ſenſe ſhould be punctually preſerved in all, or almoſt all copies, is not to be imagined, except it were the true ſenſe delivered from the beginning. Thirdly, that *if there*

may

may be found any different readings in divers copies of the New Teſtament, which diſagree in ſenſe, as well as in words, (which ſcarce ever happens in any thing which is accounted a material point of Religion,) *then it ſeems to be moſt fit and proper to admit of that reading and ſenſe, which beſt agrees with the tenour of the whole, with the ancienteſt and beſt eſteemed tranſlations, and with the evident principles of ſound reaſon. And if any place be ſo obſcure, as that none of theſe ways will afford any light into its meaning, then I think that no ſtreſs ought to be laid upon it in any neceſſary part of Religion.*

XXV. But ſome will demand, how are we ſure of the ſenſe and meaning, even of thoſe places of the New Teſtament, where there is no difference about the words? In anſwer to this, I have already ſhewn, (§. 21.) that we are not to follow the guidance of the Church of Rome, to know the true doctrine of Jeſus, nor therefore, conſequently, to know the true meaning of the New Teſtament, in which his doctrine is owned to be contained. I have

have ſhewn alſo, (§. 22.) that though general tradition may be a good help, yet may it not always be a certain rule to lead one to the unaltered doctrine of Jeſus; nor therefore, conſequently, to the true and genuine interpretation of the New Teſtament. Since therefore there is no other way to be found, I conclude, that *the New Teſtament is to be interpreted the ſame way that other books are*; that is, by conſidering the ſenſe and property of the words and ſentences, and the ordinary figures of ſpeech, as they are commonly uſed in the ſame book, and in others written in the ſame language, and about the ſame time; together with the ſcope, drift, coherence, and occaſion of the diſcourſe. *To which end, every man that is learned*, being bound to uſe his beſt endeavour to know the will of God, (as I have ſhewn, §. 14.) *is obliged, according to the meaſure of his learning, to conſult lexicons, commentators, and ancient writers, and to uſe all other helps*; that he may both ſatisfy himſelf, and alſo be able to inform others.

XXVI.

XXVI. But perhaps I ſhall be told, that when a man has done all this to the beſt of his power, yet, after all, he may be miſtaken, as it appears that many learned men are, ſince they oppoſe and contradict one another about the meaning of the New Teſtament. To this I anſwer, that ſince I have ſhewn, (§. 3.) that all neceſſary things (whether as to belief or practice) in Religion, are eaſy to be underſtood; I muſt from hence conclude, that *a ſober and honeſt enquirer cannot eaſily be miſtaken in the interpretation of thoſe places of the New Teſtament, which do contain any neceſſary part of Religion.* And as for other parts and paſſages of it, if men would be but peaceable, (which is plainly enough commanded in the New Teſtament,) their miſtakes about them could do no harm. And again, ſince I have ſhewn, (§. 14.) that God requires no more from a man, but his beſt endeavours to know and perform his will; I do hence conclude, that *if a man be miſtaken in his interpretation even of any ſuch place as contains ſome neceſſary part of Religion; yet, if this miſtake be purely an error of the under-*

underſtanding, and does not proceed from any neglect or wilful fault of the perſon ſo miſtaking, God will never be offended with him for it. And then, what hurt can there be in ſuch a miſtake as this?

XXVII. But it may be demanded, what ſhall they do to find out the meaning of the New Teſtament, who do not underſtand any thing of the Greek, which is the only authentic language of this book? Which is evidently the caſe of much the greateſt part of mankind. I anſwer, that *he who is ignorant of the Greek tongue,* being yet obliged to uſe his beſt endeavour, (§. 14.) *muſt do the beſt he can, by reading ſome tranſlation or tranſlations of it; (or, if he cannot read himſelf, by hearing them read,) and by aſking and enquiring from ſuch of his acquaintance as he believes to be perſons of ſincerity and knowledge, to know what is the ſenſe and doctrine of the New Teſtament, and the will of God therein contained.* And, ſince God requires no more from any man, but his beſt endeavour, (§. 14.) it follows, that *if ſuch a man*

man be miſtaken, and cannot help it, God will not be offended with him neither for it.

XXVIII. And one thing more let me add, for the ſake of thoſe who are not ſkilled in the Greek tongue, viz. that ſince there have many tranſlations been made of the New Teſtament, moſt of them by perſons well ſkilled in languages, of good repute for their honeſty and integrity, and who could not but know beforehand, that their tranſlations would be narrowly ſifted and examined by learned men; (which muſt needs make them careful to commit as few faults as they could;) and ſince all thoſe things which God requires from men muſt needs be eaſy enough to be underſtood, (§. 3.) and therefore eaſy to be tranſlated and expreſſed in any language; I cannot but conclude, that *a ſober and impartial enquirer may be very well aſſured of the doctrine of Jeſus, even from the tranſlations of the New Teſtament, though he does not underſtand the Greek original.* And, foraſmuch as I can underſtand of the matter, if men did ſtand only upon the

honeſt and downright ſenſe and meaning of plain places, (which only can give us good aſſurance in Religion,) and would not quarrel about critical niceties in ſuch texts as are confeſſedly obſcure, I believe there is ſcarce any tranſlation of the New Teſtament ſo defective, but might be a ſufficient guide to any ſober man, to lead him to the doctrine of Jeſus.

XXIX. Having thus ſpoken what I deſigned of the New Teſtament, I come to ſay ſomething of the Old. And here, that the Jews, in the days of Jeſus, had among them a book, written in the Hebrew, and ſome ſmall part of it in the Chaldee tongue, which we now call the Old Teſtament, which they called the Holy Scripture, and eſteemed as the word of God, is a thing beyond diſpute. That this book was owned and acknowledged, quoted and referred to, and all people exhorted and encouraged to ſearch and ſtudy it, as the word of God, both by Jeſus himſelf, and alſo by his diſciples, is moſt evident to any one who reads the New Teſtament.

From

From whence I muſt conclude, that *the doctrine of that book, as it was then extant, is to be eſteemed as part of the doctrine of Jeſus; and that thoſe laws and commands, which are there to be found, are to be kept and obſerved by all Chriſtians, the followers of Jeſus; except where it can be ſhewn that Jeſus has freed us from the obligation of them.*

XXX. Moreover, ſince this book has been tranſlated into as many languages, and as many copies of the original have been carefully kept, in diſtant parts of the world, as of the New Teſtament; I do conclude, that *the very ſame things which juſt now were ſaid concerning the words, the meaning, and way of interpreting the New Teſtament, will hold good concerning the Old Teſtament alſo, as far as they can be accommodated to it.*

XXXI. There are ſome certain books and fragments, which among the Proteſtants are well known by the name of *Apo-*

cryphal, to which the Papiſts give the title of *Deuterocanonical*. Theſe pieces the Papiſts contend to be a real part of the Old Teſtament, and of equal authority with the other books of it: but the Proteſtants will not allow their authority to be ſacred, although they grant that there are many uſeful and profitable things contained in them. Now he that is not able to ſearch into antiquity, for the reſolving of this controverſy, may by another way be ſatiſfied about it. For ſince the Jews (from whom the Chriſtians originally received the Scriptures of the Old Teſtament) do all of them, and ever did, unanimouſly reject theſe ſame *Apocryphal* books and fragments, as being no part of their holy Scripture; I think it may from hence be ſufficiently concluded, that, *as to the controverſy about the Apocryphal Scripture, the Proteſtants are in the right, and the Papiſts in the wrong*. And yet, if the authority of thoſe pieces were as great as the Papiſts would have it, I ſee not how it could make any alteration in my Religion. For I do

I do not find any thing in them, but what is eaſily reconcileable with the reſt of the holy Scripture.

XXXII. But there are ſome difficulties, which ſeem to ariſe concerning what I have diſcourſed, to which it will be neceſſary to give a full and ſatisfactory anſwer. And, firſt, if all be granted that has hitherto been ſaid, yet how ſhall I be ſure that the book of the holy Scriptures contains, not only truly, but alſo fully and entirely, the doctrine of Jeſus; ſo that nothing is to be eſteemed as a part of his Religion, but what is contained in the Scripture? To this I might anſwer, that there are ſeveral paſſages in the Scripture itſelf, which do give us to underſtand, that the whole law and will of God, as far as it is needful for man to know them, are contained in thoſe holy writings; (as the Proteſtant divines do ſufficiently make appear in the management of this controverſy againſt the Papiſts.) But, waving this, I think it is enough to ſay, that *it is not indeed impoſſible in itſelf, but that Jeſus*

might have made known other particulars of doctrine, and of the will of God, beſides what is conſigned to us by the Scripture. And if any man can effectually prove, that any ſuch doctrine or precept was delivered by him, I think, that whoſoever is convinced of the proof, ought to believe that doctrine, and obey that precept, which appear to be ſo delivered. But he that does his hearty and ſincere endeavour to find out the doctrine and will of God, delivered to man by Jeſus, and is not able, with all his diligence, to diſcover any more of it, than what is recorded in the Scripture; if he faithfully keeps and obſerves as much of it as he is able there to diſcover, it is plain that God requires no more from him, (§. 14.) and therefore certainly will not puniſh him, for want of any thing farther.

XXXIII. Secondly, it may be objected, that, in reading theſe books, there do appear to be ſome paſſages, which are in themſelves abſurd, and contrary to the plain dictates of every man's reaſon and underſtanding, and ſome which are irreconcileable

concileable with one another. Now that the doctrine of Jeſus is certainly true, muſt be allowed, becauſe it is confirmed by God. That both parts of a contradiction cannot be true, is acknowledged by all men: and no man, I think, can own that for a truth, which is contrary to the plain dictates of his reaſon and underſtanding; which to every man is, and muſt be, the ſtandard of all truth whatſoever. For there can be no reaſon why any man receives and owns any thing for a truth, but only becauſe he apprehends it to be conformable to the plain and ſelf-evident notions, which are already planted in his mind. Here then it may be demanded, how it can be poſſible that theſe Scriptures ſhould contain the *true* and *uncorrupted* doctrine and religion of Jeſus? To this I anſwer, firſt, that *I cannot find any appearance of a contradiction, throughout the holy Scriptures, in any point of doctrine, or rule of manners, but what is ſo eaſy and obvious to be reconciled*, that no man, I think, of candour and ingenuity, but would be aſhamed to object it. Secondly, and,

as for thoſe few ſeeming diſcordances, which do occur in the circumſtances of ſome hiſtorical narrations; though I, perhaps, am not able to reconcile them, yet it may be that the things themſelves may not be abſolutely irreconcileable. But ſuppoſe they were, yet it is no derogation to the truth of the hiſtory, (as to the main ſubſtance of it) or of the doctrine contained in the holy Scriptures, that ſome of the ſacred writers have been miſtaken in the relation of ſome ſmall and inconſiderable circumſtances. There are ſeveral hiſtorians and chroniclers, which give an account of the life and reign of many of our kings of England; and although they differ in many circumſtances of things, yet this was never made an argument to doubt of the truth of the main hiſtory, wherein they all agree. And why may not the Scripture hiſtorians be as favourably cenſured as all other hiſtorians in the world are? Thirdly, there are many things, which are above my reaſon and underſtanding, which I cannot comprehend in my mind, nor frame a clear and diſtinct notion of; which yet I cannot ſay are con-

contrary to my reaſon: becauſe (though they are above my reach, yet) I do not find that they do contradict any of thoſe plain and ſelf-evident principles, which are implanted in my underſtanding. For example; I am not able diſtinctly to apprehend how the ſmalleſt particle of matter which can be aſſigned, is yet in itſelf capable of being for ever divided; ſo that no part of matter, though ever ſo ſmall, can ever be ſo much as conceived to be abſolutely indiviſible. And yet this is ſo far from being contrary to my reaſon, that my reaſon itſelf does fully ſatisfy me that the thing is ſo, though I am not able to comprehend the manner of it. The ſame thing alſo may be ſaid concerning the neceſſity of ſomething being without any beginning, (of which ſee §. 5, 6.) Now, *if I meet with any thing in Scripture, which is thus above my reaſon, but not contrary to it, I cannot refuſe my aſſent unto it.* (I mean always, upon a ſuppoſition that the words do appear evidently to carry ſuch a ſenſe.) For I cannot conclude ſuch a thing to be impoſſible, becauſe I do not find

find it contrary to my reaſon, though above it. And if it be a thing in my apprehenſion poſſible, I muſt believe it to be true, when I find that God has declared it ſo to be. Other things again there are, which are directly contrary unto thoſe ſelf-evident notions and principles, which my reaſon finds to be connatural with itſelf. For example; that *a part is equal to the whole*; and ſuch like abſurdities. Now, *if any ſuch propoſitions as theſe, which are contrary to my reaſon, ſhould occur to me in Scripture, I cannot poſſibly believe them to be true in a literal ſenſe*; (for that were to renounce the clear dictates of my reaſon and underſtanding, upon which the certainty of all things, which I believe or know, is ultimately built; and without which, I could have no certainty of the being of God, or the truth of any religion;) *and therefore I muſt needs underſtand them to be meant figuratively*. And that figure which beſt agrees to ſuch words, according to the moſt common cuſtom of ſpeech, and is moſt conformable to common ſenſe and reaſon, I think, is always to

to be preferred. I never read any book, to my knowledge, but in it I found many expreſſions, which, taken literally and ſtrictly, were abſurd and ridiculous; but, taken figuratively, as it is evident they were intended, did contain very good ſenſe and meaning. Since then the holy Scriptures were written in ſuch words and expreſſions as were commonly uſed among men in ſpeaking and writing, why ſhould we think that ſtrange in them, which is ſo uſual in all other books?

XXXIV. Thirdly, it may be objected, that this doctrine, which I have taught, leaves every man entirely to his own reaſon and underſtanding, to find out the true Religion, and the way to heaven. Now, ſince there is ſo great a difference between the notions and ſentiments of different men, it muſt needs follow, that, all men being left wholly to themſelves, there muſt neceſſarily be great variety, and even contrariety, of opinions among them concerning Religion. And if God requires no more from every man, but to do his beſt endea-

endeavour, and to chooſe that way which he thinks to be the trueſt; from hence it will follow, that two men, who are contrary one to another in the point of Religion, may yet both be in the right way to heaven; and a Turk, or a Heathen, may be ſaved, as well as a Chriſtian, if they are but ſtrongly perſuaded that they are in the right. I anſwer, firſt, that if the objection means, that I leave every man to his own reaſon and underſtanding, without any other help, to find out the truth of Religion, it is a miſtake. For I have aſſerted, that every man, according to the meaſure of his learning, ought to make uſe of all the means and helps he can, to underſtand the Scriptures, and the will of God. (See §. 14. and §. 25.) But if the meaning be, that *I leave every man to chooſe that Religion which, after a ſerious enquiry, appears to him to be the beſt*; (which is all that I contend for,) in this I ſay no more than what all men muſt and do ſay, as well as I. For either a man muſt never enquire into the truth of his Religion at all, (and then he chooſes his Religion by mere

mere chance; and ſince there are many falſe Religions, and but one true, it is great odds but he lights upon a wrong one;) or, if he does enquire, either he muſt chooſe that which he thinks not to be the beſt, (and then he acts againſt his conſcience,) or that which he thinks is the beſt; which is what I aſſert, and what every man of ſenſe profeſſes himſelf to do. Secondly, as there are many differences in the notions and ſentiments of men, concerning thoſe things which are, in ſome meaſure, abſtruſe and obſcure; ſo, on the other ſide, there are many things ſo apparent and evident, that men who are ſincere and unbiaſſed, if they have but common ſenſe, can never differ about them: amongſt which, I think, I may reckon all thoſe things, which God requires of neceſſity to any man's ſalvation. (§. 3.) And whereas the world has for theſe many years found, that compelling men to this or that Religion, contrary to their own ſentiments, has been ſo far from begetting unity of any ſort, that, on the contrary, it has even diſtracted mankind, not only with

with variety of opinions, (each party taking a delight to thwart other,) but alſo with war and confuſion: if every man were left to himſelf, to follow what Religion he pleaſes, (as he ſhall anſwer to God for his ſincerity) it is very probable, that moſt men, having no worldly intereſt to ſerve by this or that Religion, would in time be brought to agree in all the great and neceſſary truths of Religion, which are plain and evident to every ſober and inquiſitive perſon. And as for things not abſolutely neceſſary, and of an inferior ſort, (as I have ſaid, §. 26.) if men would be but peaceable, their miſtakes, and conſequently their differences about them, could do no great harm. But if men will ſtill differ even about the eſſential and neceſſary parts of Religion, I know no remedy for it upon earth; but muſt refer the matter wholly to the judgment of God in heaven. Thirdly, I do not maintain, that he who is in an error, that is, a Turk, or a Heathen, (whatſoever the ſtrength and ſincerity of his perſuaſion may be,) is in as ſure a way to heaven and ſalvation, as

as he who is an orthodox-man, and a Chriſtian. How God will deal with thoſe that are miſtaken, and cannot help it, I do not determine. All that I would inſinuate, (§. 14.) is, that he will not puniſh any man for any error or miſtake, which he falls into through a pure defect of his underſtanding, and not through any fault or neglect of his will. But how far he will reward ſuch a perſon for his good meaning, is more than I can tell.

XXXV. Fourthly, it may be objected, that this doctrine does, in effect, undermine and enervate the force and power of all civil government, by opening a way for all malefactors to eſcape puniſhment, how great ſoever their crimes may be. If ſuch a perſon ſhould plead thus for himſelf; that he was fully perſuaded in his mind and conſcience, that it was the will of God, that he ſhould commit ſuch a theft, or murder, of which he is accuſed; and that therefore, according to this doctrine, it was his duty, in the ſight of God, to act according to this perſuaſion; the ma-

magiſtrate, who knows not the hearts of men, can never be able certainly to diſcover but that this is a real truth, that he was ſo perſuaded. And if every man, in all the duties of Religion, is bound to act according to his own ſenſe and perſuaſion of things, with what conſcience can a magiſtrate puniſh ſuch a perſon for that fact, which, for ought he knows, it was his duty to commit? I will not ſay, but that it may ſo fall out, that a man may think it to be his duty to commit the moſt horrid villanies, ſince Jeſus Chriſt himſelf aſſures his diſciples, that the time would come, that whoſo killed them, would think he did God ſervice, John xvi. 2. And how far God Almighty will be merciful unto ſuch perſons, who commit ſuch facts out of pure ignorance, and not out of malice, I had rather St. Paul ſhould determine than I. (See 1 Tim. i. 13.) But to the objection, I think it ſufficient to anſwer, that the civil magiſtrate, as well as other men, is bound to act according to the cleareſt conviction and ſtrongeſt perſuaſion of his own mind. If therefore,

upon

upon the examination of all circumſtances, he be well ſatisfied, and really believes that ſuch a plea from a malefactor is no real truth; but only a mere trick, and pretence, in hopes to eſcape puniſhment; he ought to take no notice of it, but to pronounce his ſentence according to the law. But that which comes up cloſe to the objection, and which, I think, is the fulleſt and trueſt anſwer, is this, viz. That *the civil magiſtrate has nothing to do to enquire or regard how the matter ſtands between God and the conſcience of the tranſgreſſor of the law of the land, ſo as to be thereby any way influenced in the paſſing his judgment.* It is enough to him, if he be well and throughly convinced, that the laws, by which he acts, are no way contrary to the known law of God. There are many caſes, wherein a man offends highly againſt the law of God, in which the civil magiſtrate has no power to inflict any puniſhment on the offender; becauſe the fault, which he may have committed, does not, it may be, any way tend to the damage or diſturbance of the civil ſociety;

which, and which only, is committed to the care of the magiſtrate. Such, for example, are many acts of covetouſneſs, or of prodigality, and other ſins; againſt which it is not poſſible to provide by any human laws. And, on the other ſide, there are ſome caſes, wherein a man may ſtand abſolved before the tribunal of God, and yet be very juſtly condemned by the magiſtrate. Thus, for inſtance, if a man has committed theft or murder, and, upon a ſincere and hearty repentance, has obtained the pardon of his ſins from God; yet, nevertheleſs, if ſuch a perſon be accuſed, and legally convicted, of ſuch crimes before the civil magiſtrate, he not only may, but ought to put the law of the land in execution againſt him, though he believes him to be ever ſo penitent; that it may be a terror unto others. For if this ought not to be done, every malefactor, by a pretence of repentance, (which cannot certainly be diſcovered by any but God,) might eſcape the laſh of the law: by which means all wicked men would be encouraged to commit all ſorts of crimes.

crimes. Thus alſo, when the children of Iſrael were commanded by God to conquer the land of Canaan, we read how they ſent ſpies to make a diſcovery of the land, that they might the more eaſily invade it. Now it is moſt certain, that theſe ſpies did nothing but what they had God Almighty's warrant for; and yet, if they had been taken by any of the Canaanitiſh magiſtrates, and legally convicted of their deſign, who doubts but that it had been lawful for them to have puniſhed them, according to the law of war, and the law of nations? For it is none of the magiſtrate's buſineſs to enquire who keeps or tranſgreſſes the laws of God; (for the law of God extends to many caſes, where the magiſtrate's authority has nothing to do;) but they who tranſgreſs the laws of the land, and thereby diſturb the peace of the commonwealth, are, upon a due conviction, to be puniſhed by the magiſtrate, without any farther enquiry; it being his buſineſs to do every thing which appears to be neceſſary for the preſervation of the weal-publick, provided that he does

nothing which is contrary to the known laws of God, who is the ſupreme King and Lord of all.

XXXVI. But fifthly, it will be objected, that whatever becomes of the civil magiſtrate's power, yet this doctrine, which here is taught, muſt certainly defeat and cancel all that authority, with which the Church is endowed and inveſted. For though the civil magiſtrate has no more to look after but only the peace and preſervation of the commonwealth; yet ſurely it is the duty of the Church to take cognizance of thoſe things, which are committed merely againſt the law of God. But how can the Church call any man to an account for any ſin or tranſgreſſion, when a man may plead for himſelf, that he thought it was his duty? which plea, if really true, (and who but God can diſprove it?) is ſufficient, according to this doctrine, to juſtify him before God, and conſequently to indemnify him from all cenſures of the Church. To this I anſwer, that the authority of the Church (i. e. of a Chriſ-

a Chriſtian ſociety) is twofold, viz. either that authority, wherewith it is inveſted immediately by God, or that which is conferred on it by the civil laws and conſtitutions of the kingdom or commonwealth. The latter of theſe is a civil authority, though exerciſed by eccleſiaſtical perſons, becauſe it is derived altogether from the civil power; and therefore the conſideration of it muſt be referred to what is but now ſaid touching the civil magiſtrate. But as for that authority, which is given to the Church immediately by God; it is evidently no more than this, viz. an authority to preach the Goſpel, and to perſuade men every where to receive it; and an authority to exclude thoſe men out of the ſociety, (that is, out of the viſible communion of it,) who do not profeſs the true Chriſtian faith, and live according to the Chriſtian law. Other authority than this does not appear to be given to the Church by God. And nothing that I have ſaid does in the leaſt tend to abridge them any way as to the exerciſe of this power. *The Church may and ought to*

preach the Goſpel, and perſuade men to embrace it. And however any man may be excuſed before God, by invincible ignorance; yet he is not to be ſuffered in the viſible communion of the Church, if he does not believe and live as a Chriſtian.

XXXVII. Sixthly, it may be objected, that I have ſeveral times in this diſcourſe made uſe of a diſtinction, which diſtinction is nevertheleſs rendered altogether uſeleſs and impertinent by the main deſign of the diſcourſe itſelf. The diſtinction is between *neceſſary* matters of Religion and ſuch as are *not neceſſary*, (which is referred to, §. 26. and elſewhere.) But if no man can be obliged, in any matter of Religion, any farther than to do his beſt endeavour, from thence it muſt follow, that all things are alike neceſſary in Religion. For whatſoever is within a man's power, according to this doctrine, is neceſſary for him; and whatſoever is not within his power, is not neceſſary; ſo that the very ſame thing may be neceſſary in reſpect of one man, and not neceſſary in reſpect of another; which

which confounds the diſtinction, and renders it uſeleſs. To this I anſwer, that *by things neceſſary, I mean all ſuch as it is a ſin for a man to be ignorant of, if the knowledge of them be within his power.* Such as are, that *Jeſus is the Son of God*, that *God is to be worſhipped*, &c. *By things not neceſſary, I mean, ſuch as a man is not obliged ſo much as to ſearch after; the ignorance whereof ſhall not be accounted ſinful before God, although it might have been in a man's power to have known them.* Such are a great many curious ſpeculations, which Divines do trouble themſelves and the world with; which they themſelves do yet confeſs are not neceſſary to any man's ſalvation; and, conſequently, which a man is no more obliged to trouble his head with, than with any problems, either in geometry, or natural philoſophy.

XXXVIII. Seventhly, it may be objected, that this doctrine muſt needs encourage men to continue in their ignorance, and not to take any care or pains

to inform themſelves concerning the truth of Religion, or any of the duties of it. For why ſhould a man take any pains to get more knowledge, (which will, it may be, bring trouble in the practice of it,) when ignorance is no manner of bar to his ſalvation? For let him but live according to the knowledge which he already has, and God, it ſeems, requires no more from him. To this I anſwer, that *for a man to act according to the beſt of his knowledge, will not ſerve his turn; except he has uſed his beſt endeavour, by all means, to know and underſtand the will of God as perfectly as he can*, (as I have ſhewn all men are bound to do, §. 14.) Which, though it is a comfort to thoſe who are ignorant, and cannot help it; yet is no manner of encouragement or excuſe for thoſe, whoſe ignorance is their own fault or neglect.

XXXIX. My reaſon having thus brought me to embrace the Chriſtian Religion, and directed me where and how to ſeek for the particular doctrines of it; it follows

follows now, that I ſhould put this ſpeculation into practice; that I would ſearch the Scriptures with all the diligence I can, and ſet my mind, with all its faculties, on work, to find out as much as I am able of the will of God, that I may the better conform myſelf unto it. This, with God's help, I deſign ſpeedily to do: and the reſult of my thoughts ſhall be publiſhed to the world, if what I here write prove acceptable. But, in the mean time, *I think it not improper here to add ſome general conſiderations, which may ſerve as rules and guides to me, or to any other perſon,* who ſhall ſet himſelf upon ſuch an enquiry; *to direct our judgments aright to the true doctrine of Chriſtianity, and to keep us from all miſtakes about it.*

XL. Firſt, then, I take it for granted, that the Chriſtian Religion is calculated for men of reaſon and underſtanding, that is, that it is fit to ſatisfy and convince every ſober man, who ſeriouſly conſiders the arguments on which it relies, and is not led aſtray by paſſion, by prejudice, or worldly

worldly intereſt. That this is ſo, appears very evidently from hence; becauſe both Jeſus and his Apoſtles do appeal to the common reaſon and underſtandings of men, to judge of what they taught. *Yea, and why even of yourſelves judge ye not what is right?* ſays Jeſus, Luke xii. 57. *Prove all things, hold faſt that which is good*, ſays St. Paul, 1 Theſſ. v. 21. *Be ready always to give an anſwer to every one that aſketh you a reaſon of the hope that is in you*, ſays St. Peter, 1 Pet. iii. 15. *Believe not every ſpirit; but try the ſpirits, whether they are of God*, ſays St. John, 1 Joh. iv. 1. Hence then I conclude, that *there can be nothing in Chriſtian Religion, which contradicts the clear and evident principles of natural reaſon.* For otherwiſe a rational man could not be a Chriſtian. (See §. 33.)

XLI. Secondly, it appears plain to me, that Chriſtian Religion was calculated, not only, nor chiefly, for men of great and deep learning; but alſo for thoſe of ordinary, plain, and mean capacities; that is to

to ſay, that there is nothing neceſſary in Chriſtianity, but what may be as well underſtood by every ordinary, illiterate man, as by the greateſt ſcholars. If this were not ſo, it would not be poſſible for an unlearned man to be as good a Chriſtian as one that is learned: whereas the contrary is moſt apparently declared in the New Teſtament. *I thank thee, O Father, becauſe thou haſt hid theſe things from the wiſe and prudent, and haſt revealed them unto babes*, ſays Jeſus, Matth. xi. 25. To which the words of St. Paul do exactly agree, 1 Cor. i. 19. to verſe 7. of the ſecond chapter. And the ſame St. Paul gives us a caution, that *philoſophy* ſhould not corrupt our Chriſtianity, Col. ii. 8. and warns Timothy againſt *ſcience, falſely* ſo called, 1 Tim. vi. 20. But there is nothing ſo much as intimated throughout the whole Bible, that philoſophy, or any other human learning, will qualify a man ever the better to become a Chriſtian. I confeſs, indeed, that, as things ſtand at this time in the world, it is highly convenient that the teachers and preachers of Chriſtianity

ſhould

ſhould be competently ſkilled in human learning, that they may be the better able to defend their Religion, and the purity of it, againſt thoſe who uſe ſo much art and ſkill, either to corrupt or oppoſe it. But where a man ſets up, not for a teacher, but only for a true believer, it is evident from what has been ſaid, that he has no need of ſcholarſhip, but only of a plain and ſober underſtanding, to make him capable of all neceſſary inſtruction for a good Chriſtian. Or elſe, why ſhould the Goſpel be preached ſo particularly to the *poor*, Matt. xi. 5. who are commonly illiterate? And how ſhould the *poor in this world* become ſo *rich in faith?* as St. James tells us, Jam. ii. 5. From whence I think I may conclude, that *all ſuch doctrines, the underſtanding and proof whereof depend either on the ſubtile ſpeculations of human philoſophy, or the niceties and criticiſms of grammatical learning, or the curious knowledge of hiſtory and antiquity, are not to be eſteemed as neceſſary parts of Chriſtianity.*

XLII. Thirdly, it is no leſs evident to me,

me, that the main deſign of Jeſus, and of his Diſciples, whom he ſent to preach the Goſpel, was, to make men not wiſer, as to matters of ſpeculation, but better, and more virtuous, as to their lives and actions. *Knowledge puffeth up*; *but charity edifieth*, ſaith St. Paul, 1 Cor. viii. 1. Thus alſo, chap. xiii. of the ſame epiſtle, he gives us to underſtand, that the gift of *tongues* and of *prophecy*, the underſtanding of all *myſteries*, and all *knowledge*, and *faith*, are of no value before God, without *charity*. And that by charity he means a life led in the practice of virtue and piety, ſufficiently appears by the ſequel of that chapter. The ſame St. Paul tells us, Tit. ii. 11, 12. that *the grace of God, that bringeth ſalvation, hath appeared unto all men*; (for what end? To make them more wiſe, more learned, or more lofty in their ſpeculations? No ſuch thing: but) *teaching us, that, denying ungodlineſs, and worldly luſts, we ſhould live ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly in this preſent world.* And, to omit a multitude of texts, which might be alleged in ſo plain a matter, I ſhall only add what

what we are told, Rom. ii. 6, &c. that God *will render unto every man according to his deeds*, &c. Which is a plain demonſtration, that it is our *deeds*, that is, our practices, our lives and converſations, that we are chiefly obliged to take care of. I grant, indeed, that God may, if he pleaſes, command things that are purely ceremonial, and ſuch as have no manner of influence upon virtue and morality; as undoubtedly he did unto the children of Iſrael: and if he does command any ſuch things, it is certain that we owe obedience to them by virtue of that authority which God has over us. He may alſo reveal ſuch truths as are merely ſpeculative, and have nothing practical in them: and whoſoever is convinced of any ſuch revelation, is undoubtedly bound to give his aſſent to the things ſo revealed, although they are beyond the reach of his underſtanding; as I have ſaid §. 33. But from what I have here ſaid, I think I may conclude, that *ſince virtue and morality are undoubtedly the chief deſign of Chriſtianity, they ought to be chiefly regarded, and attended to,*

to, by all Chriſtians. Nor ought any thing, which is purely ceremonial, or ſpeculative, to be reckoned as a neceſſary part of Chriſtian Religion, except it appears very evidently, that God has revealed or commanded it. Very evidently, I ſay: for when a thing is conceived in dark and doubtful expreſſions, it is very liable to be miſtaken; and he that is guilty of ſuch a miſtake, can very hardly be charged with a fault.

XLIII. Fourthly, that the knowledge of God Almighty, his attributes, and his law, may, in part, be gathered from the light of nature, (antecedent to any revelation,) is evident from reaſon, and acknowledged by St. Paul. *For the inviſible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly ſeen, being underſtood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and godhead*, Rom. i. 20. (See Pſal. xix. 1.) And *when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, theſe having not the law, are a law unto themſelves; which ſhew the work of the law written in their hearts, their con-*

conſcience alſo bearing witneſs, and their thoughts the mean while accuſing or elſe excuſing one another, Rom. ii. 14, 15. Now, although all things relating to Religion, which may be known by the light of nature, are, I think, again repeated, and farther explained by the holy Scripture; yet, becauſe it may be that this will not appear ſo plainly to every one, I think it neceſſary here to note, that *we are obliged to give our aſſent to thoſe truths, and our obedience to thoſe laws of Religion, which we are able to diſcover by our natural reaſon, although the ſame ſhould not appear to us to be again repeated in Scripture.* For, for this very reaſon, St. Paul pronounces the ancient Gentiles to be *without excuſe, becauſe that when they knew* GOD, that is, had ſome knowledge of him by their natural underſtanding, *they glorified him not as* GOD, by owning and obeying him, Rom. i. 20, 21, &c. And what is it elſe, but an appeal to the natural notions of mankind, when he exhorts us, that *whatſoever things are true, whatſoever things are honeſt, whatſoever things are juſt, whatſoever*

ever things are pure, whatſoever things are lovely, whatſoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praiſe, we ſhould think on theſe things. Philippians iv. 8.

XLIV. Fifthly, he that writes a treatiſe upon any ſubject, whatſoever he has a mind that his reader ſhould particularly obſerve, and be convinced of, he will be ſure to lay it down plainly, as a main concluſion; nor will he fail, (if he be diſcreet) as often as occaſion requires, to repeat and refer to it, that the more notice may be taken of his meaning and deſign. Such things as are mentioned only occaſionally and collaterally, and not as any part of the main ſubject of the diſcourſe, are not always expreſſed with ſo much care and exactneſs, but that often even the meaning of them may be miſunderſtood. Nor can we be always certain what is the true ſenſe and opinion of a writer, from ſuch accidental expreſſions, (which ſometimes may be uſed figuratively, ſometimes by way of alluſion or ac-

commodation, ſometimes with reference to the capacity of people, without any regard to the literal truth of them,) except he gives us ſome farther explication of his mind. From whence I think I may conclude, that *the neceſſary doctrines and precepts of Chriſtian Religion are not to be gathered from thoſe collateral and occaſional expreſſions, which are ſcattered up and down in the Scriptures; but from the main ſcope and deſign of the whole Bible in general, and of each book of it in particular.*

XLV. I have thus briefly and plainly given, I hope, a rational account of Religion, and of Chriſtianity in general. If I find that what I have here written is likely to do any good in the world, I ſhall proceed, with God's aſſiſtance, to draw out and publiſh a particular account of the doctrines to be believed, and duties to be practiſed, by a Chriſtian.

END OF THE FIRST PART.

A

GENTLEMAN'S RELIGION.

PART II.

IN WHICH THE NATURE OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION IS PARTICULARLY ENQUIRED INTO AND EXPLAINED.

A

GENTLEMAN'S RELIGION.

PART II.

I. THE holy Scriptures being the only authentic record that I am able to find of the Chriſtian Religion, I take it for granted, that they *do expreſs divine matters really and truly as the things are in themſelves:* and therefore I cannot but believe, that all the doctrine therein delivered is moſt certainly true, although many times I am not able to underſtand the deſign and meaning of ſome expreſſions and paſſages, which do occur therein. I think it indeed to be very proper, that men of any reaſonable learning and prudence ſhould modeſtly offer their thoughts to the world, in order to the explaining of ſuch places

of the Scriptures, as appear to be abſtruſe and difficult: *but he who ſpeaks his own words* (and not thoſe of Scripture) *can therein only offer his own apprehenſions*; to which no man can be obliged to ſubſcribe, any farther than as he is in his own reaſon convinced of the truth of them, and their conſonancy with the Scriptures.

II. I do not apprehend that an implicit faith is due to the Church of Rome, which challenges it, (Part I. §. 21.) much leſs ſure to any other Church, which does not require it. *When*, therefore, *any Church, much more when any private men, do offer me any doctrine of Religion in their own words, I think I ought to conſider*, firſt, *whether what they ſay is intelligible*: (for though we may be obliged to believe ſuch things as are above our underſtanding to comprehend, (Part I. §. 33.) yet it is impoſſible for any man to give an explicit aſſent to any form of words, if he does not know the meaning of them.) Secondly, *whether it is agreeable to the ſelf-evident principles of reaſon*; for, if I apprehend

hend it to be otherwiſe, it is impoſſible for me to believe it. (Part I. §. 33.) Nor muſt any text of Scripture be interpreted above the level of plain and ſelf-evident reaſon, whatever the literal ſenſe may ſeem to be. *And*, thirdly, *whether the truth of it can be proved by any ſolid argument*, either from reaſon or Scripture; for though a doctrine be both intelligible and poſſible, yet ſtill it may be falſe; and therefore is not to be believed, except it can be proved. Theſe rules I have endeavoured ſtrictly to obſerve in the trial of thoſe doctrines, which I am now about to propoſe; and I deſire my reader carefully to make uſe of the ſame, in the examination of all that I ſhall offer unto him. But here I muſt deſire him to take notice, that I do ſuppoſe him to be well acquainted with the holy Scriptures, and alſo with the common arguments, upon which the ſeveral parties of Chriſtians do ground and maintain their opinions: and therefore, for his eaſe, as well as my own, I ſhall ſave myſelf the labour of mentioning ſuch arguments and places of Scripture, as are

uſually brought to prove thoſe points, which are generally acknowledged by all Chriſtians; and even in thoſe points, which are controverted between different parties, I ſhall ordinarily think it enough to hint at ſome of thoſe texts and arguments, which are uſed on either ſide; of which I can ſcarce ſuppoſe any man to be ignorant, that is but moderately acquainted with the principles of Chriſtianity, and the ſeveral parties that profeſs it.

III. *To believe what God makes known, and to do what he commands,* is what all men call *Religion:* but things that are impoſſible, it is certain that God requires from no man. (Part I. §. 14.) *When* therefore *damnation is denounced in Scripture againſt thoſe who receive not the Goſpel, it muſt needs be underſtood only of them, in whoſe power it was to have received it*; and not of ſuch as are invincibly ignorant; either for want of capacity, John ix. 41. or of the means of knowledge, John xv. 22. But for a man, who has both the capacity and means of knowledge, through

through negligence to continue in ignorance of God's will, my reaſon tells me is a very great ſin; beſides all thoſe places of Scripture, which do require us diligently to ſeek after knowledge.

IV. That *there is a God*, is ſufficiently to be proved from our own reaſon and obſervation: *but fully to comprehend his nature*, or declare in all points what he is, *is by all allowed to be impoſſible to us.*

V. That *God never had a beginning*, I think I have ſufficiently concluded (Part I. §. 6.) And if the holy Scripture had not told me, that he is from everlaſting to everlaſting; yet my own reaſon would have inferred, that *he is ſubject to no decay, nor ever ſhall have an ending.*

VI. The nature of every material being ſeems neceſſarily to imply a poſſibility of having its parts disjoined and ſeparated one from another, and, conſequently, of being diſſolved and deſtroyed; and therefore I conclude, that the eternal *God does not*

not conſiſt of matter; and that Being which is intelligent, and does not conſiſt of any material parts, I call a ſpirit: and this is what I mean, when I ſay that *God is a ſpirit*. As for thoſe expreſſions, *the eyes of the Lord*, the *arm of the Lord*, and ſuch like, which do occur ſometimes in Scripture, and ſeem to imply bodily parts, it is manifeſtly obvious, that they muſt be purely metaphorical.

VII. Our experience does ſufficiently teſtify, that whatſoever is viſible to us, is ever material. Since therefore God does not conſiſt of matter, I conclude that he *is inviſible to mortal eyes*, as the Scripture poſitively declares him to be: and all thoſe texts, which ſeem to ſay, that he has been ſeen by man, I think muſt of neceſſity be interpreted ſome other way, viz. either, 1. of an angel appearing in a glorious and majeſtic manner: or, 2. of the eternal Son of God aſſuming a bodily appearance, as after he took our nature upon him: or, 3. of ſome viſible and extraordinary ſigns and tokens, that the inviſible God

God was there preſent in an extraordinary manner: or, 4. of thoſe myſtical and hieroglyphical repreſentations which God has ſometimes been pleaſed to make of himſelf, not to the ſenſes, but to the imagination and underſtanding of his prophets, in their ecſtatic dreams and viſions.

VIII. Amongſt all thoſe things which I can conceive poſſible to be done, i. e. to imply no contradiction, I can find nothing which to me appears more difficult, than what God has already done in the ſtructure of the univerſe: and therefore I conclude, that God can do whatſoever in itſelf is poſſible to be done, which is what I mean when I ſay, that *he is almighty*: nor is there any one, ſure, who will venture to ſay, that God can do ſuch things as imply a contradiction, either in themſelves, or to his own nature and attributes.

IX. That God, who made all things, ſhould be ignorant of any thing, appears to me moſt abſurd to imagine. But when I ſay,

I ſay, that *God is omniſcient*; if there is any thing, the knowledge of which would manifeſtly imply a contradiction, it could ſurely be no greater irreverence to ſay, that God could not know, than that he could not do ſuch a thing. But whether the knowledge of a future contingent would imply a contradiction or not, is a very abſtruſe and metaphyſical diſpute; and except the contrary can very clearly be made appear, I know not how to imagine, that God is or can be ignorant of any thing paſt, preſent, or to come, however contingent.

X. If God were or could be confined to or circumſcribed in any determinate ſpace or place, it would be hard to conceive that his knowledge and power ſhould be infinite, and extend to all places. But I cannot ſuppoſe God to be preſent in all places after the ſame manner as the air is every where preſent throughout its region, or the light throughout its hemiſphere; for that would imply local extenſion, and, conſequently, that he were a material

material being, contrary to what I have ſaid, §. 6. But that God can in an inſtant exert his power in any, or all places, whenever he pleaſes, (as the ſoul can on a ſudden move the extremeſt joint of the body,) is, I think, an evident conſequence of his omnipotence; and that manner of exiſtence, whereby he is able to do this, I call omnipreſence; and this is all that I am able to conceive, when I ſay, that *God is every where preſent.*

XI. That *God is moſt wiſe*, that is to ſay, moſt perfectly knows what is always fitteſt and beſt to be done, and which is the propereſt way to bring what he pleaſes to paſs, is an evident conſequence from his omniſcience, or rather indeed a branch of it.

XII. From God's wiſdom it neceſſarily follows, that his *counſel is unchangeable.* For he who alters or repents of any thing, which he has once poſitively determined, plainly ſhews his foreſight to be imperfect, and his wiſdom defective. When therefore

fore we meet with ſome paſſages in Scripture, which ſeem to ſuggeſt that God has decreed one thing, and yet afterwards done another, we muſt of neceſſity underſtand ſuch decrees to have been not abſolute, but merely conditional, (a condition being in many caſes implied and ſuppoſed, where it is not in words expreſſed.) And when he is ſaid to have repented of ſome things which he has done, or to have been grieved thereat, we muſt needs interpret ſuch places in a metaphorical ſenſe, with an alluſion to thoſe motions and paſſions in mankind; juſt as *hands*, *arms*, *eyes*, &c. are on the ſame account ſometimes aſcribed unto him, though really he has no ſuch members, no more than he has the paſſions which belong to men.

XIII. I do moſt evidently find in myſelf a power to chooſe at all times what I pleaſe, and to determine my own actions as I will myſelf: and this I look upon to be a greater perfection in me, than if I were abſolutely neceſſitated and determined

mined by ſomewhat without myſelf, in every thing which I ſhould do. Since therefore I derive this perfection originally from God, who is the contriver and author of my being, (Part I. §. 7.) I cannot but aſcribe the ſame in the higheſt degree to Him, who muſt be the fountain of all perfection. And therefore I moſt readily believe, that *God is a free agent*, and worketh all things after the counſel of his own will.

XIV. How juſtice, in a ſtrict ſenſe, is to be aſcribed unto God, who owes nothing to any one, and has a ſupreme and moſt abſolute dominion over all things, as having made them purely at the motion of his own will, I look upon to be a nice and uſeleſs diſquiſition. But the common rules of juſtice, which men are obliged to obſerve one to another, to me do appear to be ſo very reaſonable, that I cannot apprehend why any one of knowledge and underſtanding ſhould ever vary from them, except thereby he might propoſe either to advance his intereſt, compaſs his pleaſure,

pleaſure, or wreak his malice; neither of which I can imagine to have any place in God. I therefore conclude, that *God is juſt*, even according to the common rules of juſtice and equity, as far as they can be applied to him.

XV. Veracity to me appears to be no leſs agreeable to reaſon than juſtice, if it be not rather a part of it: and ſince I am able to imagine no ſhadow of a reaſon why God ſhould declare any thing which were falſe, I cannot but believe that *he is moſt true* in all that he ſays.

XVI. That God ſhould hate thoſe creatures which he has made, (except they by their evil actions and diſobedience do deſerve it,) is not to be conceived: and as he who loves another is always ready to pardon his faults, (eſpecially if they have any way proceeded only from frailty and infirmity,) upon his true and ſincere repentance; ſo if the perſon beloved continues obſtinate and incorrigible in his tranſgreſſions, he, with all the reaſon that can be, forfeits that

that love which he once enjoyed, and juſtly incurs ſuch penalty as may be ſuitable unto the obligations which he has broken, and the quality of the perſon he has offended. I therefore conclude, that *God has originally a love for all mankind*, and that he *will be always merciful unto ſuch ſinners as are truly penitent; but ſtrict and ſevere in the puniſhment of thoſe, who go on in the breach of his laws without repentance.*

XVII. *Nor are thoſe calamities, which ſo often follow us in this life, or God's viſiting the ſins of the fathers upon the children,* (which can be underſtood only of temporal afflictions,) *or his puniſhing the wicked with extreme and everlaſting miſery, any manner of derogation, either to his juſtice, or his love and mercy towards mankind,* ſince temporal afflictions may well be looked on as the effects of his love, as being deſigned to wean and purge us from the love and filth of this world, and to make us more fit for heaven: and eternal damnation (of which we have fair warning given

us, and may therefore avoid it if we pleaſe,) is as little as can be threatened (and often is but too little) to keep us back from all manner of ſin and wickedneſs.

XVIII. That ſome ſort of actions are eternally and eſſentially good, that is to ſay, to be approved of by every impartial rational being, (*e. g.* to love Him from whom we derive our exiſtence, to perform our promiſe, and ſuch like,) and that the contrary actions hereunto are therefore eſſentially and eternally evil, is to me from hence ſufficiently evinced, becauſe that if all beings, which are endowed with reaſon and underſtanding, ſhould univerſally ſet themſelves to do thoſe things which now are accounted evil, and to omit thoſe things which now are eſteemed good; the conſequence of this muſt neceſſarily be univerſal confuſion and miſery. Now, that God loves and approves of all actions that are good, does evidently appear, becauſe ſuch actions do tend to the general happineſs of his creatures, whom he loves, (§. 16.) and for the contrary reaſon

ſon it will follow, that he hates and abhors all actions that are evil. And this is what I mean, when I ſay, that *God is moſt holy*.

XIX. All poſſible excellency or perfection that I can conceive, is reducible unto theſe five heads, viz. 1. Perfection of being, which conſiſts in perpetual duration, without any decay or infirmity. 2. Perfection of underſtanding, which conſiſts in ſuch knowledge and wiſdom, as is free from all miſtake or ignorance. 3. Perfection of the will, which conſiſts in a free liberty to chooſe or refuſe, without any conſtraint or fatal neceſſity. 4. Perfection of power, which conſiſts in an ability to do every thing. And 5. Moral perfection, which conſiſts in an inflexible reſolution always to do and encourage that which is morally good, and to avoid and diſcourage whatſoever is morally evil. Now, ſince all theſe perfections are in God in the moſt abſolute manner, as I think I have ſhewn in the foregoing paragraphs; from

hence it will follow, that *God is moſt abſolutely perfect.*

XX. And ſince he who is abſolutely perfect can ſtand in need of nothing, it muſt alſo follow, that *God is moſt perfectly happy in himſelf.*

XXI. As my reaſon does evidently demonſtrate unto me the being of a God, ſo does it not in the leaſt ſuggeſt to me any argument to conclude, that *there is* any more *but one God*: and it is abſurd and unreaſonable to multiply beings without any ground or reaſon for it.

XXII. That there is a real, and not only a nominal diſtinction between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghoſt, or Spirit; that they are frequently ſpoken of in the holy Scriptures in ſuch terms as we ordinarily uſe when we ſpeak of Three Perſons; (although ſometimes this expreſſion, Holy Ghoſt, or Holy Spirit, may be put to ſignify not ſo much the Perſon, as the

the power, effect, or energy of God's Spirit;) that, although the Son be often ſpoken of as really and truly a man, yet many things are ſaid of him, which cannot agree to a mere man, or to any created being whatſoever; and that there are ſuch things alſo ſpoken of the Holy Ghoſt, as cannot be accommodated unto a creature: moreover, that the Son derives his being from, and always depends upon, the Father, as the Holy Ghoſt does from and upon the Father and the Son: all theſe things, I ſay, in my opinion, are not to be denied by any one, who will but interpret the holy Scriptures according to the ordinary ſenſe and ſignification of the words thereof, and not according to his own prejudices or preconceived opinions. And although the *Socinians* do clearly enough expound ſome of thoſe texts of Scripture, which, with more zeal than reaſon, are ſometimes urged againſt them; yet, as to the principal paſſages, which are alleged to prove what I have now aſſerted, I think their interpretation of them not only to be harſh and ſtrained, (which in a

manner is acknowledged even by their own acute and brief hiſtorian, in the laſt paragraph of his ſecond Letter,) but alſo, many times, to be utterly irreconcileable unto the words and context. And now (to explain thoſe conceptions which ariſe in my mind, upon the conſideration of the texts here hinted at, as well as, in a matter ſo abſtruſe and remote from my ſenſes, I am able) ſince I cannot find a more proper term to expreſs the diſtinction of the *Father*, *Son*, and *Holy Ghoſt* by, *I call them Three Perſons*; *and*, not knowing what other title to give a divine Perſon who is no creature, *I call each Perſon God: but I give the title of God in a more emphatical manner unto the Father, than unto the Son or Holy Ghoſt*, becauſe the Father depends on none, but they do depend on him: *and*, ſince both my reaſon and the holy Scriptures do teach me to own no more than One God, I am of neceſſity compelled to ſay, that *theſe three are ſo united together* (though in ſuch a manner as is above my underſtanding) *as to be but One God*. And although it argues a great deal

of

of imperfection in human ſpeech, that, for want of other fit and proper terms, we are forced to give the ſame appellation to each Perſon ſingly, and to the Three conjointly; yet this does not imply any manner of contradiction, as ſome do object; becauſe, when we apply the word *God* to one ſingle Perſon, it has not the ſame *exact* and *adequate* ſignification, as when we aſcribe it unto the Three Perſons conjointly; (for that would imply that each ſingle Perſon were, at the ſame time, the Three Perſons; and ſo confound that diſtinction which the holy Scriptures do ſo often and apparently make between them:) and this analogical difference, in the ſignification of the word *God*, will eaſily ſolve moſt of thoſe objections, which the Socinians do bring againſt the doctrine of the Trinity. And becauſe I know no better word to expreſs that unity which I apprehend to be between the *Three Perſons*; I therefore ſay, that they are *One in eſſence*, or ſubſtance. For unity of concord or conſent alone does not ſeem enough to me to denominate them to be One God. And becauſe I find that *the*

Son is ſaid to be begotten, and the Holy Ghoſt to proceed, or be ſent or emitted; I therefore make uſe of theſe terms, without pretending to aſſign the difference between generation and proceſſion: and although *the Son and the Holy Ghoſt*, being each of them God, *are*, and muſt needs be, *of the ſame nature, and*, upon that account, *equal with the Father*; yet it is manifeſt, that this equality muſt be underſtood with an allowance for the abſolute independence of the Father, and the dependence of the Son and Holy Ghoſt upon him.

XXIII. All the objections that I can remember to be made againſt the doctrine of the Trinity thus ſtated, I think, are eaſy enough to be ſolved by what I have now ſaid, excepting two, which muſt be particularly anſwered. The firſt is taken from John x. 33, &c. But though our Saviour did not here aſſert his divinity, when there ſeemed to be occaſion for it; yet it will not follow, that therefore he is not God; eſpecially if we conſider, that it was

was not always his cuſtom to give full and complete anſwers unto ſuch captious queſtions and objections as were put to him: but ſometimes he contented himſelf only with ſhewing the unreaſonableneſs of thoſe who propoſed them; of which we have one inſtance, Matt. xxi. 23, &c. and another, John viii. 3, &c. and, as ſome think, another, Matt. xxii. 17, &c. and we may as well conclude, that he had no authority for what he did, becauſe he did not declare it when the chief Prieſts and Elders queſtioned it, Matt. xxi. 23. as deny his divinity, becauſe he did not expreſsly maintain it, when on that account he was charged with blaſphemy. The other objection is drawn from Mark xiii. 32. But to it I anſwer, that our Saviour's deſign, in that place, being only to repreſent the day there ſpoken of, as a ſecret not to be made known unto men until it ſhould come upon them; that they might always ſtand upon their guard, watch, and prepare for it: let but the word *know* be taken to ſignify *make known*, (which fully anſwers the deſign of the place, and, as it

is

is evident, St. Paul uſes the ſame word, 1 Cor. ii. 2. *I determined*, ſays he, *not to know*, that is, not to make known or teach, *any thing among you, ſave Jeſus Chriſt, and him crucified*;) and then the moſt natural paraphraſe of that place will be this: *But that day and hour there is no one who ſhall or can make known unto you; no, not the angels which are in heaven*; (who may be ſuppoſed to be ignorant of it themſelves,) *nor even the Son himſelf*; (who although he *knoweth all things*, John xxi. 17. yet *can do nothing of himſelf, but what he ſeeth the Father do*, John v. 19. and *who ſpeaketh not of himſelf, but the Father, which ſent him, gave him commandment what he ſhould ſay*, John xii. 49.) *but the Father only ſhall in his own time make it known by bringing it to paſs*. And this expoſition of this place of Scripture, (which is the *only* text that ſeems to preſs very hard upon us in this controverſy,) I am ſure, is much more eaſy and natural, than *many* of thoſe interpretations, which the Socinians do advance, of the principal paſſages which we urge againſt them. But

if

if any one ſhall tell me, that this whole matter concerning the Trinity is very obſcure and difficult to be apprehended; and therefore that it is unreaſonable to require the explicit belief of ſuch doctrine, as neceſſary either to ſalvation or church-communion;—as to the obſcurity, it is not to be expected that it ſhould be otherwiſe, ſince, in this life, *we know* but *in part, and propheſy in part*, and *ſee* but *through a glaſs darkly*, or *in a riddle*, as the margin has it word for word from the original, 1 Cor. xiii. 9. 12. As to church-communion, I ſhall ſpeak of it hereafter in its proper place: and as touching ſalvation, I refer my reader to what I have ſaid, §. 3. and Part I. §. 14. and §. 26.

XXIV. Either the matter of this viſible world did from all eternity coexiſt together with God, or elſe it was produced from nothing by him, there being no third way to be aſſigned. Now, both theſe ways being above, though neither of them contrary to, my reaſon, my reaſon alone can never ſolidly determine which of them is the right.

right. But the latter of theſe making moſt, in my opinion, for the honour of God, (of whom, as being the moſt perfect Being, I think I ought to entertain the moſt glorious thoughts that poſſibly I can;) and the holy Scriptures ſo often aſcribing eternity without beginning unto God, in an emphatical manner, as his alone peculiar attribute, I am thereby brought to believe, that *the matter of this world* is not eternal, but *was at firſt created by God from nothing*; *and* conſequently that *God can again annihilate it, or any part of it*, if it ſhould ſo pleaſe him.

XXV. That *God did contrive, frame, and faſhion this world*, and every part of it, *and* alſo that *he ſtill preſerves and governs it by his providence*, I have formerly concluded, Part I. §. 7. and §. 10. And though every ignorant perſon is not able to dive into and fathom the counſels of a great and ſovereign prince; yet this is no argument that he does not manage and rule his dominions with due care and wiſdom: nor could the making, nor can the go-

government of the world be any manner of trouble to God, (as the Epicureans objected) ſince he is abſolutely omnipotent, and needs no more but to ſpeak the word, and the thing is done.

XXVI. It is very evident, that the Heathen world itſelf was generally and ſtrongly addicted to the belief of certain beings (ſome good and ſome evil) ſuperior in nature to man, but ſubject to, and miniſters of, the will and pleaſure of the ſupreme God. But the holy Scriptures do give us a more full and perfect account of this matter, viz. that *God created certain ſpiritual beings, called angels*; that is to ſay, meſſengers, as being ſent forth by him to execute his will upon all occaſions that he thinks fit; and particularly to miniſter for them who ſhall be heirs of ſalvation: (not that God has any need of their aſſiſtance or miniſtry, any more than he has of the worſhip and ſervice of man; but only thought fit to create them of his own good will and pleaſure; and probably that they, as well as man, might be objects for him

him to exerciſe his goodneſs and beneficence upon.) But whether every particular perſon, ſtate, and kingdom have their proper guardian-angels appointed them by God, is not, as I can find, upon any ſure grounds to be determined. *But* we are farther informed, that *of theſe angels ſome ſinned, and therefore kept not their firſt eſtate*, but were caſt down into hell, and delivered into chains of darkneſs, to be reſerved unto judgment; *the chief*, or prince, *of whom is called the Devil*, the great Dragon, the old Serpent, and Satan, *and is*, together with his angels, *permitted by God to range to and fro in the earth, to tempt even the godly, but to prevail and work in the children of diſobedience.*

XXVII. That an eternal ſucceſſion of men, or any other beings, without a beginning, is abſolutely impoſſible, I have, I think with reaſon, already ſaid, Part I. §. 6. That man at firſt was not faſhioned by any blind and undeſigned chance, is to me very evident, as well from the wonderful frame of his mind, as from the great

great variety, regularity, and uſefulneſs of all the parts of his body, and particularly his organs of ſenſation. And that he did not at firſt ſpring up out of the earth by any force of nature, diſtinct from the power of God, I think, needs no proof, becauſe the contrary ſuppoſition is not only without any ground of evidence, but alſo liable to ſo many monſtrous improbabilities, as do render it highly extravagant to imagine. I therefore muſt conclude, that (at the leaſt) *the firſt male and female of mankind were immediately framed and faſhioned by God*; *and* that *all the reſt of them were and are derived from thoſe two, by the way of natural generation*, (Chriſt Jeſus excepted, who, though born of a woman, was not begotten of a man) is the plain voice of the holy Scripture.

XXVIII. That man, though made a little lower than the angels, is yet by nature far more excellent than any other living creature, is ſufficiently apparent. The holy Scripture tells us, that God made man after his own image: but this ex-

expreſſion cannot be underſtood with reſpect to the ſhape and ſtructure of the human body, (God being both incorporeal and inviſible) but is, as I apprehend it, to be interpreted altogether with relation to thoſe faculties, which are implanted in the mind of man, and that internal uprightneſs, in which he was at firſt created; which do carry in them an evident ſimilitude and analogy unto ſome of thoſe attributes and perfections, which are in God himſelf. That *the body of man is made originally of the earth*, by which it is nouriſhed, and into which it is again reſolved, is obvious to be collected from reaſon: *and* if I had never been told, that *God breathed into his noſtrils the breath of life, whereby he became a living ſoul*; yet thoſe powers and faculties which I find in myſelf, of thinking, judging, drawing conſequences, (and thoſe ſometimes in a very long train) reflecting back upon my own thoughts, and determining my own actions as I pleaſe, together with that inward ſatisfaction which I reap from doing what is morally good, though naturally, and

and to my body painful and uneaſy; and the trouble, which I find upon the doing of any thing which is morally evil, though otherwiſe never ſo pleaſant and delightful, would, I think, have ſufficiently taught and aſſured me, that there is a principle within me, which, though united to my body, (and thereby affected with its delights or pains,) yet is really diſtinct from it, and of a different nature, and more noble original, which I call my Soul.

XXIX. That God, who has originally a love for all mankind, (§. 16.) ſhould have created any man, with an intent to make him eternally and unavoidably miſerable, is to me a contradiction: and ſince, on the contrary, he has naturally implanted in every man a vehement and unextinguiſhable deſire of being happy, and of always remaining ſo, I cannot but conclude, that *God intended man at his firſt creation unto eternal happineſs*. For that he ſhould implant the ſeed and principle of ſuch a deſire in us all, which never fails to ſpring forth and ſhew itſelf in eve-

ry man, who comes to years of knowledge; and this to be only a torment to us, without any poſſibility either of ſuppreſſing or ſatisfying it; is, I think, not to be conceived, except we ſhould ſuppoſe, that at the firſt he made us to be objects, not of his love, but hatred.

XXX. As even by the ruins of a noble ſtructure we may be able to give a gueſs how goodly the building was at its firſt erection; ſo when I at preſent conſider how diſtorted the nature of man is, (his luſts and paſſions always ſtruggling with, and often getting the victory over, his reaſon, which evidently was deſigned for the ſuperior faculty,) my own underſtanding alone methinks ſuggeſts to me, that *man was at firſt created in a more perfect and upright ſtate and condition than what he is in at preſent. But* how *our nature was* ſo far *perverted*, as that all our reaſon and endeavours cannot again reduce it to that firm and perfect regularity, in which we are ſenſible it ought to be, and therefore have cauſe to believe that it was at firſt framed

framed by God, is what of ourſelves we never could have collected from any ſuggeſtions of our own underſtanding.

XXXI. Whether the ſecond and third chapters of the book of Geneſis are all to be underſtood literally, or whether an allegorical interpretation is in ſome parts to be admitted, I think myſelf not much concerned to debate. But, which way ſoever we take, the plain reſult will be, that, whereas God placed our firſt parents, at their creation, in a ſtate both of innocency and happineſs; they, by tranſgreſſing his law, and thereby incurring his diſpleaſure, fell both from the one and the other. Now, that they by their ſin might deprave their own natures, and vitiate their conſtitutions, is no way irrational to ſuppoſe: and that, from the depraved nature and vitiated conſtitution of parents, divers inconveniences may be entailed upon their poſterity, (who derive not only their bodily temper and complexion, but frequently alſo their paſſions and inclinations from thoſe of their pa-

rents,) is what common experience does daily teſtify. When therefore *the holy Scripture aſſigns the ſin of our firſt parents, as the cauſe of the corruption of the nature of mankind*, I ſee nothing therein, which is not very reaſonably to be allowed.

XXXII. He who grants a favour to another, barely, and only of his own free will and pleaſure, may, without any violation of juſtice, whenever he pleaſes, withdraw that, which he is under no obligation to continue any longer than he thinks fit. Nor is it any way to be reckoned as unmerciful or cruel, to ceaſe the continuance of a purely voluntary kindneſs, if the ſtopping of it does not render the perſon actually miſerable without any fault committed by him. If therefore God had thought fit, even for no other reaſon but his own pleaſure, to divert the ſtream of his kindneſs from man; and that although he had continued in a ſtate of innocency, provided he had not put him into a ſtate of unavoidable miſery; who could have any juſt reaſon to complain, or find

find fault with him for doing what he ſhould pleaſe with his own? Much more then will it follow, that, if, upon the occaſion of our firſt parents' tranſgreſſion, and the corruption of our nature, which thereupon enſued, God had reſolved to cut us all for ever off from the inheritance of thoſe bleſſings, to which man was deſigned at his firſt creation, but now rendered naturally unfit for by this original pollution; even in this there had been nothing contrary to the ſtrict rules of juſtice or mercy: eſpecially if we conſider, that all the world have ever thought it reaſonable, that, in ſome caſes, children ſhould, on account of their parents' faults, loſe ſome benefits and advantages, which otherwiſe they would have enjoyed. But actually to inflict a poſitive puniſhment upon any one for a fault, which he never committed, nor any way voluntarily concurred to, nor was at all capable of hindering in him who committed it, being ſo directly contrary, not only unto mercy, but alſo to the common rules of juſtice, I cannot but conclude, that *though the original cor-*

ruption of our nature may be reckoned as a juſt occaſion why God might, if he had pleaſed, *have excluded us all for ever from the joys of heaven*; *yet that alone is not to be aſſigned as a cauſe why he will doom any man to the torments of hell*, who does not otherwiſe deſerve it, by his own actual ſins and tranſgreſſions.

XXXIII. That by the corruption of our nature we are all of us mightily inclined to things that are evil and immoral, is moſt evident from our conſtant experience: but that we have not thereby loſt all knowledge and power of doing that which is good, I think is no leſs apparent, from the writings and examples of ſo many brave Heathens; who having no other divine law but that which was written in their hearts by the ſuggeſtions of their natural underſtanding, yet both taught and did ſo many of the things contained in the written law of God. But curiouſly to diſtinguiſh and aſſign the bounds between nature and grace, (which are both the gifts of God; the one in an ordi-

ordinary, the other in an extraordinary way,) and to pretend to ſhew how far we may go by the bare ſtrength of nature, and where it is that we juſt ſtand in need of ſupernatural aſſiſtance, I look upon to be a work of very little uſe or benefit; but of extraordinary difficulty, and perhaps impoſſible for any, but God himſelf, to perform. Moreover, how God will deal with thoſe, who have no other guide to follow but the light of nature; how far he will puniſh their ſins, be merciful to their ignorance or infirmities, or reward their endeavours to do good, is a ſecret, of which we are no way able to give any particular account. But it may ſuffice us to know, that the generation of *mankind, by reaſon of the corruption of their nature, being apparently in a worſe condition in reſpect of eternal ſalvation, than what they otherwiſe would have been*; *God* was pleaſed to determine, that he *would not deal with them according to that abſolute ſovereignty which he had over them, nor according to the ſtrict and rigorous rules of juſtice*, which might have juſtified the greateſt ſeverities; *but*

according to the inclinations of his mercy and loving-kindneſs. Of which way of God's proceeding with us, I come now to give an account.

XXXIV. That God might, if he had pleaſed, without the violation of any of his attributes, have freely forgiven all the ſins of mankind, and even reſtored our nature again to its primitive integrity and uprightneſs, ſeems naturally to follow, both from the abſoluteneſs of his authority, and the almightineſs of his power: and even the ſtricteſt juſtice, though it fully allows, yet does not compel any one to exact a debt where he is the only creditor, or a puniſhment where he is the only party injured or offended. But if *God has thought fit* to deal after another manner with us, and *rather* offers *to help our infirmities, as occaſion requires, than wholly to repair our perverted nature; and chooſes to have an expiation made for our ſins, rather than to remit them without any ſuch conſideration*; although his will and pleaſure is enough to ſilence all our exceptions,

ceptions, and juſtify his proceedings, yet may there ſome probable conſiderations be urged, in order to make us clearly apprehend the wiſdom of God, in the fitneſs and reaſonableneſs of this his diſpenſation: as namely, that hereby we are, or ought to be, made more continually ſenſible of our conſtant dependance upon him, of his great mercy and compaſſion for us, and his perfect hatred and abhorrence of ſin.

XXXV. It cannot, I think, be doubted but that, at the very time of the fall of man, God, who is infinitely wiſe and knowing, and therefore ſtands in need of no time to deliberate, had fully determined what he would do, in order to the expiation of our ſins, and the helping of our corrupted nature, ſo as that we might be again in ſome capacity of recovering that happineſs, to which we were at firſt deſigned, (§. 29.) And that this work of *our redemption was to be performed by the means and mediation of* an extraordinary perſon, who was to be ſent into the world, under the

the title of the Meſſiah, or the Chriſt, is abundantly evident, both from the Old and New Teſtament, eſpecially if we compare them and expound them one by another. But it is certain, that Chriſt did not immediately come into the world; nor was there any one, for ſome thouſands of years after the fall, who ſo much as pretended to that title or office: whether it were, that God thought it fit, by ſome previous diſpenſations, to prepare the minds of men for the reception of ſo extraordinary a perſon, or for what other reaſon, I pretend not to determine; but think myſelf obliged entirely to ſubmit to the wiſdom of God, who thought fit ſo to order it, that the Meſſiah ſhould not appear until that fulneſs of time, which he had appointed for it. In the mean while, although the great light was not yet to come into the world, yet God ſuffered it not to be wholly overſpread with darkneſs: but beſides the light of the viſible creation, which declares the glory and eternal power of God; and beſides the natural light, which ariſes in every man's

man's underſtanding, whereby they, who have no other law, are a law unto themſelves, unto which their own conſcience is a witneſs beyond exception, God was pleaſed in a ſupernatural way to reveal himſelf unto divers perſons, (to the intent that they might teach the knowledge of him to others,) as to Enoch, Noah, Melchizedek, Job, and probably to many more than we read of, (amongſt whom, why Balaam ſhould not be reckoned, I can ſee no reaſon; although covetouſneſs and the hopes of worldly advancement tempted him to make but an ill uſe of the good gifts of God,) and alſo to chooſe out unto himſelf a peculiar people, namely, that of Iſrael, and to vouchſafe unto them a more than ordinary knowledge of himſelf and his laws, by his ſervants Moſes and the Prophets: and laſtly, by his providence to order the matter ſo, that the writings of Moſes and the Prophets ſhould, many years before Chriſt's coming, be tranſlated into the Greek tongue, (which was then the moſt univerſal language,) that by them all nations might have

have the more inſtruction, and ſo be the better prepared to receive the Meſſiah, whenever he ſhould be made known unto them. And for this reaſon alſo it ſeems to be, that God, ſo long before the Moſaic law, ordained and appointed the ſacrificing of beaſts; whereby it became the common practice of the Gentiles, as well as Jews: not that he had any eſteem or value for the blood of bulls or of goats; but only that, by this practice, the minds of men might be the more eaſily and readily diſpoſed to own and rely upon that great ſacrifice, which Chriſt was one day to make of himſelf for them.

XXXVI. There are ſeveral prophecies diſperſed up and down through the Old Teſtament, plainly deſigned to foretel the coming of the Chriſt or Meſſiah, what ſort of perſon he ſhould be, and what he ſhould do and ſuffer: as that he ſhould be the ſeed of the woman, of the progeny of Abraham, of the family and lineage of David, born in Bethlehem, and born of a Virgin: that he ſhould come into the world

world about the time that the Scepter and the Lawgiver, that is to ſay, the force and power of civil authority, ſhould ceaſe from the tribe of Judah, and ſhould finiſh his work in the compaſs of the laſt ſeven years of thoſe four hundred and ninety, which are pointed out by the prophet Daniel; that by many he ſhould be deſpiſed and rejected, ſhould be a man of ſorrows and acquainted with griefs, be oppreſſed and afflicted, yet bear it moſt patiently, and at laſt be wounded and cut off, not for himſelf, but for our tranſgreſſions. And yet for all this he is foretold to be a perſon wonderful, a Counſellor, the mighty God, the Prince of peace, of the increaſe of whoſe government there ſhould be no end, and unto whom the gathering of the nations ſhould be. Now, although there may ſome difficulties be ſtarted, as to the interpretation of ſome of thoſe and ſuch like prophecies, which do occur in the Old Teſtament, (which is no great wonder, conſidering how the Jews, who are enemies to Chriſtianity, have endeavoured to obſcure and perplex them.)

them,) yet if we do conſider that there is evidently a fair, conſonant, and reaſonable application of all theſe predictions to be made unto Jeſus of Nazareth, and that there is not, nor ever was, any other perſon, to whom they could be applied, beſides himſelf; and ſince it is not poſſible for any one, but God, to foretel a thing with ſo many circumſtances ſo long before it comes to paſs, I think I may very well from hence conclude, not only againſt the Jews, who acknowledge, but alſo againſt all others, who may perhaps, at firſt, deny the authority of the Old Teſtament, that *Jeſus of Nazareth is the Chriſt*, or Meſſiah, whom God had promiſed to ſend into the world: and if to this we add the greatneſs of his miracles, and the tranſcendent goodneſs of his doctrine, (of which ſee Part I. §. 19.) I think the argument will have the force of a demonſtration.

XXXVII. In the holy Scriptures I find ſuch things ſpoken of Chriſt, as do plainly ſhew him to have been a true and real man;

man; in all things like unto us, ſin only excepted: other expreſſions alſo I find frequently applied to him, which cannot poſſibly agree to any man, or created being whatſoever, but only unto God; as I have already ſaid, §. 22. And although there is a plain diſtinction made between his divine and human nature, yet is he always ſpoken of but as one perſon. Here then I know not better how to expreſs my ſentiments, than by ſaying, that in the one and ſingle perſon of Chriſt there is a conjunction of both the divine and human nature, and conſequently that *Chriſt* is really and truly *both God and man.* And if the ſame objection be made againſt this doctrine, as is againſt that of the Trinity, viz. that it is very obſcure and difficult to be apprehended, I ſhall alſo return the ſame anſwer, as I have already done to that in the latter end of §. 23. to which I refer my reader.

XXXVIII. He who acknowledges Chriſt to be God, to be ſure will allow of his eternal exiſtence, as to his divine nature:

ture: and, as to what concerns his human nature, that *he was conceived by* the power of *the Holy Ghoſt, born of the Virgin Mary*; and that, after ſome years ſpent in preaching and doing good, he was, through the malice of the Jews, and at their vehement deſire, condemned by Pilate the Roman governor to be *crucified*; which was accordingly done, and a ſpear thruſt into his ſide; that being *dead* he was *buried*, and lay in the ſepulchre unto the *third day*; upon which *he roſe from the dead, and* after ſeveral times converſing with his diſciples for the ſpace of forty days, that he *was* viſibly taken up from them, and *received into heaven* unto infinite and eternal glory, *where he is our perpetual mediator and interceſſor at the throne of God:* all this, I ſay, is ſo evidently and without controverſy teſtified by his diſciples, (whoſe veracity I have aſſerted, Part I. §. 19.) and recorded in the Scriptures of the New Teſtament, (whoſe authority I have proved, Part I. §. 23, &c.) that no reaſonable man, I think, can now deny, or ſo much as doubt of any part of it:

it: and although there are one or two paſſages of Scripture, from whence it is inferred, that *Chriſt* before his reſurrection did *deſcend into hell*; yet will I not venture, nor do I think it neceſſary, to determine whether by the word *hell* is meant the ſtate of the dead only, or the place of the damned; or (if the latter ſignification be to be choſen) for what end and purpoſe it was that he deſcended thither. Only I conclude certainly, that it was not to ſuffer any thing there; becauſe I do not find the leaſt intimation throughout the Scripture, of any ſuffering of Chriſt, which he did or was to endure, beyond the ſhedding of his blood, and yielding up his life upon the croſs.

XXXIX. What God might have done (had he ſo pleaſed) without any other conſideration, but only by virtue of his own abſolute authority; if he has rather choſen to do it for the ſake of Jeſus Chriſt, and in conſideration of that obedience which he performed, and thoſe ſufferings which he underwent, who ſhall dare to find fault

with him, or pretend to be wiſer than he? Now that *it is for the ſake of Chriſt, and of his obedience and ſufferings, that God vouchſafes to us the pardon of our ſins, and makes us the offer of everlaſting happineſs*, is ſo plainly declared in many places of the holy Scriptures, that nothing can be more. And ſince I find God's ſending of Chriſt to be ſet forth as an inſtance of his love, not to ſome few particular perſons only, but even to the whole world; and ſince Chriſt is ſaid to have died for all, and to have been a propitiation for the ſins of the world, without any exception; I cannot but conclude, that all men who ever were, or are, or ſhall be, might have been or may be the better for Chriſt and his ſufferings, if through their own default they have not or ſhall not forfeit that benefit which was deſigned them. And as it is not diſputed, but that the ancient Patriarchs, who by faith foreſaw the coming of Chriſt, had a ſhare in that redemption which he wrought, although they died before he came into the world; ſo to me it ſeems to ſtand with a great deal

deal of reaſon, that even thoſe perſons, who never heard any thing of Chriſt, may yet for his ſake find mercy from God; becauſe God, who perfectly knows the moſt ſecret inclinations of all hearts, may clearly foreſee, that if the knowledge of Chriſt had been propoſed and offered unto them, they would have owned him, and ſubmitted unto his Goſpel; which, our Saviour tells us, was the very caſe of Tyre and Sidon; and for which reaſon he declares, that they ſhould receive a milder doom than Chorazin and Bethſaida in the day of judgment, Matt. xi. 21, 22. And how far this may extend to all ſuch as labour under very ſtrong prejudices, although not ſtrictly invincible, I think that God is the only proper judge.

XL. But however God may think fit to deal with thoſe, who are either ignorant of, or ſtrongly prejudiced againſt, the Chriſtian Religion; yet the manner of his proceeding with true believers is plainly enough declared. All thoſe who receive and own the Chriſtian faith, are not to be

looked upon as ſo many ſeparate perſons, each of them believing ſuch and ſuch doctrines; but are always repreſented in Scripture as joined together in one ſociety or body, which is called the Church, of which Chriſt Jeſus is the chief or head; and under an obligation to live in communion and fellowſhip one with another, under thoſe laws and conſtitutions which Chriſt has given them; but not, that I can find in Scripture, obliged to join with, or ſubmit to, any one perſon, as the vicar of Chriſt, and the viſible head of the Church upon earth. For if Chriſt had appointed any ſuch perſon as his deputy upon earth, he muſt either have declared a matter of ſuch conſequence with great plainneſs and evidence, or elſe it would be very hard to find fault with any man for being miſtaken in it: whereas the arguments, which thoſe of the church of Rome bring to prove, either that ſuch a vicar there muſt be, or that St. Peter the apoſtle was the man, or that the Pope or Biſhop of Rome (and not the Biſhop of Antioch) is the ſucceſſor of St. Peter, both in his biſhop-

biſhoprick and authority, are all ſo weak and precarious, ſo forced and perplexed, and ſo fully confuted by the Proteſtant divines, that nothing, in my opinion, but blindneſs of underſtanding, or worldly intereſt, can prevail with the members of that church, ſtill to inſiſt upon them. Now, that *Chriſt inſtituted but one Church*, in which all true believers and good livers are for ever to be compriſed, is very plain. And although, through the miſtakes and perverſeneſs of man, this Church is rent and divided into oppoſite and contending parts and parties; yet this does not hinder but that, according to its true and primitive conſtitution, it is, or ought to be, one; (as a kingdom or commonwealth, by its laws and conſtitutions, is but one ſociety, although there may ariſe factions and different intereſts in it;) nor ſhall any man be eſteemed as a member of the Church before God, who is not ready and willing, according to the beſt of his power and knowledge, to maintain the unity of it, and that upon thoſe very terms, and none other, which Chriſt has appointed,

as near as poſſibly he can find and apprehend them. Moreover, that all the laws and conſtitutions, on which Chriſt has founded the Church, and by which he would have it regulated, are exactly agreeable unto the rules of ſound morality, and the will of God, cannot be ſo much as doubted; and therefore it is truly ſaid, that *the Church is holy*, although every particular member thereof has both his frailties and his ſins; which yet he muſt repent of, and ſo become holy as the Church is holy, or elſe he violates one of the main and fundamental laws, and ſo becomes as it were an outlaw of the Church, and forfeits his part in all the privileges that belong unto that ſociety. And whereas, before the coming of Chriſt, the people of Iſrael did enjoy more of the favour of God, and had greater privileges and advantages, on the ſcore of their being God's choſen and peculiar people, than any, or all other nations of the world; the Goſpel of Chriſt, on the contrary, now looks upon all as equally entitled unto God's favour, (and the advantages

tages thereon depending) who take care duly to qualify themſelves for it. So that whereas formerly *the Church* (that is, the choſen people of God) might have been ſaid to be particular, as being in a manner limited to one nation or people; now, on the contrary, it is *catholick*, that is to ſay, univerſal, as being no way confined to one place or nation; all people being equally choſen by God in Chriſt, who will receive and live according to the Goſpel.

XLI. In thoſe ſeveral revelations, which God was pleaſed to make of himſelf, after the fall of man, unto Adam, to Abraham, and to the people of Iſrael, there was ſtill a plain intimation given them, that in the time to come there ſhould an extraordinary perſon ariſe in the world, who ſhould yet more clearly make known the will of God to mankind. But when Chriſt, who was that perſon, did accordingly come, and ſend his apoſtles to preach the Goſpel over all the earth, he neither ſuggeſted to them, nor they unto the world, that any other revelation was ever after to be

expected; but always gave them to underſtand, that God had in the Goſpel completed and finiſhed all that declaration, which he intended to make of himſelf, or his will, unto mankind, until the general judgment and diſſolution of the world. If therefore the holy Scripture had given me no manner of aſſurance of the perpetuity of the Church, my own reaſon would have been enough to make me conclude, that God in his providence will ſo order the matter, as that *the Chriſtian Religion*, being the only known and ordinary means of eternal ſalvation, *ſhall never be wholly extinguiſhed* while the world laſts, ſo as to ſtand in need of any new revelation to revive and reſtore it. But that there ſhall always be a certain company of men, evidently conſpicuous to the world, teaching and profeſſing the true Chriſtian Religion, without any error or corruption in doctrine or worſhip, is what I can no where find promiſed or foretold, either by Chriſt or any of his apoſtles. On the contrary, there are ſeveral paſſages in the New Teſtament, which do plainly ſeem to fore-

foretel, that, in proceſs of time, moſt pernicious doctrines and practices ſhould prevail and take place, even amongſt the generality of thoſe who ſhould profeſs themſelves to be diſciples of Chriſt. And whoſoever ſhall but lightly compare the ſtate of Chriſtianity for ſeveral centuries before the Reformation, with that draught of it which is left us by Chriſt and his Apoſtles in the holy Scriptures, muſt, if he be impartial, I think, be fully convinced of the truth of thoſe predictions.

XLII. Whether or no God has or does at any time communicate or beſtow any extraordinary grace or aſſiſtance upon thoſe, who are no viſible members of the Church, but altogether ſtrangers unto that revelation which he has made of himſelf, is a queſtion, which the virtuous lives and heroic actions of ſome brave Heathens make it hard poſitively to determine in the negative. But that *he will give* ſo much *grace and ſtrength to every one who ſhall become a member of Chriſt's Church*, as that thereby they may, if the fault be not

not their own, ſufficiently qualify themſelves for eternal happineſs, by the performance of thoſe things, which he requires on their part to be done, is what I think no man can doubt of, who does but in general conſider the mercy and love which God deſigned, even unto all men, but more eſpecially unto the Church, in ſending our Saviour Chriſt Jeſus into the world; although there were not any particular promiſes of this nature in the Goſpel: and that this *grace and ability to do good is in Scripture aſcribed unto the miniſtry and influence of the Holy Ghoſt upon the hearts and minds of true believers*, is plain, and generally owned by all Chriſtians. But that this influence of God's Spirit does not work ſo uncontrollably, but that it may be reſiſted, and even wholly rejected and loſt, is, I think, ſufficiently obvious, as well from reaſon and experience, as from thoſe paſſages of the holy Scripture, wherein we are exhorted not to quench the Spirit, but to walk in and be led by the Spirit, and the like; which were apparently needleſs, and to no purpoſe, if the operations

tions of the Holy Spirit upon our hearts were ſo ſtrong, as that we could not chooſe but comply with them. Now, *the things which God requires* to be performed *on our part*, in order to life everlaſting, *are* apparent, and can be no more but to believe thoſe truths which he has made known, which is called *faith*; and to obſerve thoſe precepts which he has commanded, which is called *obedience*. And as I have already ſhewn, that theſe things are required from no man beyond the meaſures of poſſibility, Part I. §. 14. ſo does the Scripture moſt fully aſſure us, that *God will* in them make a very ſufficient allowance for the ignorance and frailty, and even for the perverſeneſs of our nature; and will not only be merciful unto our weakneſſes and ordinary failings, but will pardon and *forgive even our greateſt and moſt wilful ſins, upon our true and hearty repentance, which is a part of our obedience*. And as for the ſin againſt the Holy Ghoſt, which is ſaid to be abſolutely unpardonable, I do not think it needful to enquire here into the nature and conſequence

quence of it, but ſhall refer my reader to that excellent ſermon of Dr. Tillotſon, the late Archbiſhop of Canterbury, upon that ſubject. But here it is highly neceſſary that we ſhould all take that caution, which both reaſon and the holy Scriptures do give us, viz. that we ſhould not preſume ſo much upon God's mercy and lenity, as from hence to take occaſion of going on in our wickedneſs; for kindneſs thus abuſed will certainly turn into the higheſt wrath, and much increaſe the damnation of a ſinner.

XLIII. I am inclined to think, that thoſe arguments, which are drawn from the nature of the human ſoul itſelf, are not by themſelves ſufficient to prove that it is immortal; but, on the contrary, that the eternal duration of any created being depends not ſo much upon its own nature, as upon the will of God, who created it. But as reaſon alone ſuggeſts unto us, that there is a life to come after this, (Part I. §. 13.) and that man was at firſt deſigned by God unto life eternal, (Part II. §. 29.) ſo does the

the holy Scripture moſt clearly aſſure us, that *they who perform what God requires, ſhall be happy to all eternity*; *and they who do not ſo, ſhall be miſerable without end.* The reconcileableneſs of which with God's juſtice and mercy, I have accounted for §. 17. But wherein this happineſs of the righteous ſhall conſiſt, we can but very imperfectly tell; and whether the puniſhment of the wicked ſhall literally be in everlaſting fire, or whether that expreſſion be only made uſe of metaphorically, to ſignify the greatneſs of the torment, I think it not neceſſary to determine. But both my own reaſon and ſome places of Scripture do ſeem ſtrongly to ſuggeſt, that neither the reward of good men, nor the puniſhment of the evil, ſhall be equal unto all; but greater or leſs, according as they have exceeded one another in the holineſs or wickedneſs of their lives.

XLIV. That all men are mortal, is ſufficiently teſtified by our daily experience: but that the ſouls of men, immediately upon their ſeparation from their bodies, are

are not in a ſtate of inſenſibility, but are ſtraightway conveyed into a ſtate, either of joy or miſery, ſeems very apparent to me from St. Paul's deſire to be diſſolved, that he might be with Chriſt; from our Saviour's promiſe unto the thief upon the croſs; and from the ſtory or parable of the rich man and Lazarus; as alſo from ſome other intimations, which the holy Scripture gives us. But ſince *there is*, one day, *to be a general judgment of all mankind before the tribunal of Chriſt*, where every man muſt receive his ſentence for eternal, either happineſs or miſery, (as the holy Scripture does aſſure us) it ſeems not irrational to judge, that neither the righteous nor the wicked do receive their full and final portion, until that judgment be paſſed upon them. I know not therefore how to condemn thoſe, who anciently took up the cuſtom of praying for their deceaſed friends, who had lived holily, and died piouſly, that they might find favour and acceptance at the general judgment, and have their portion of glory augmented; but I can by no means approve

prove of thoſe, who, upon ſuch pitiful ſuggeſtions, have preſumed to determine, that there is ſuch a place as Purgatory, where the ſouls of men are to be purged, and ſuffer a temporary puniſhment, before their admiſſion into heaven. And although I look upon their praying for the dead to be a miſtake, rather than a ſin; yet their taking of money for ſo doing, and raiſing ſuch a revenue upon that fund, I look upon to be a moſt ungodly cheat and impoſition upon the people.

XLV. Although I do not apprehend, that there is any natural decay in the general frame and ſtructure of this world; yet it is certain, that, by the power of God, who made it, it may, whenever he pleaſes, be deſtroyed and diſſolved; and the Scripture aſſures us, that it ſhall be ſo *at the time of the general judgment*; at which time alſo *there ſhall be an univerſal reſurrection of the bodies of all thoſe who have died*, and a change of thoſe who ſhall be then alive. But whether all the ſame indi-

individual particles of each man's body, which have been laid down in the earth, ſhall be raiſed and reunited again to their ſouls, I look upon to be a needleſs enquiry. What St. Paul ſays upon this argument, 1 Cor. xv. 35. does abundantly ſatisfy me; the purport of whoſe words I take to be this, viz. that God, who, being the author of nature, has given ſuch a vegetative power to a grain of corn, that when it is thrown into the ground, and there macerated and diſſolved, it ſprings up again, and brings forth a body ſuitable and proper to itſelf; that that ſame God, I ſay, both can and will, at the laſt day, from the dead and diſſolved bodies of men, raiſe up ſuch bodies as ſhall pleaſe himſelf. And as there is a continual and great change of particles in the human body between the birth and the grave; ſo I ſee not what abſurdity would follow, if we ſhould allow alſo that there is a like change between the grave and the reſurrection.

XLVI.

XLVI. And thus I have endeavoured to give a brief and plain account of that part of Chriſtianity which is purely or chiefly doctrinal; which, upon the moſt ſtrict ſearch that I have been able to make, I think is exactly agreeable to the tenour and main deſign of the holy Scriptures, and no way contradictory to the principles of plain and ſound reaſon. And if in many other points of ſpeculation, which by ſome are adopted into Religion, I am either wholly ignorant, or, perhaps, doubtful and undetermined, or, it may be, miſtaken; yet, if to the belief, which I have here profeſſed, I do ſuperadd a virtuous and Chriſtian courſe of life, I hope there is no moderate Chriſtian, who does not in effect make it a part of his Religion to be uncharitable, but will allow that I may be ſaved. But wherein this virtuous and Chriſtian life conſiſts, and what are the duties which the Goſpel obliges us all to perform, (whether they are the duties of pure morality, as to love God and our neighbour; or thoſe of poſitive inſtitution,

as to be baptized, to receive the holy communion, &c.) is to be the ſubject of the third and laſt Part of this ſmall work; to which, therefore, I now proceed.

END OF THE SECOND PART.

A

GENTLEMAN'S RELIGION.

PART III.

IN WHICH THE NATURE OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION IS PARTICULARLY ENQUIRED INTO AND EXPLAINED.

A

GENTLEMAN'S RELIGION.

PART III.

1. ALL the commands of God, and conſequently *all the duties of a Chriſtian, are* reducible to theſe two, viz. *to abſtain from that which is evil, and to do that which is good, according to his ability.* Thoſe actions I call good, which either are eternally agreeable unto the nature, circumſtances, and mutual relations of perſons and things, and therefore for ever to be approved of by every impartial rational being, (as I have ſaid, Part II. §. 18.) for which we muſt appeal to every man's reaſon, (as we do to his eyes, without any other demonſtration, to prove that the ſun ſhines,) or elſe are expreſsly commanded

by God, of his own poſitive will and pleaſure, (to whom, as being his creatures, we all owe an entire obedience,) for which we muſt have our recourſe to the holy Scriptures of the New Teſtament only; all the poſitive inſtitutions and ordinances of the Moſaic Law, which were given by God to the people of Iſrael, being abrogated, and the obligation of them annulled by our Saviour Chriſt; although the moral part of it, which contains the precepts and rules of eternal good and evil, and wherein the very life and ſoul of that law conſiſted, be not only abetted and confirmed, but alſo very much improved by him. And ſuch actions as are contrary to good, that is to ſay, either diſagreeable to the nature and circumſtances of things and perſons, or elſe poſitively forbidden by God, I call evil. I am indeed of opinion, that in the holy Scriptures we have not only the poſitive commands of God, whereby ſome things, which otherwiſe would have been indifferent, are enjoined or forbidden; but alſo, either in particular, or at leaſt in general, a ſufficient account

count of all thoſe actions, which are eternally good or evil, and therefore to be done or avoided by us; and this deſigned by Almighty God for the direction and inſtruction of thoſe men, who have not ability to dive into and diſcover thoſe things by the ſtrength of their reaſon. And therefore, in order to deſcribe the whole duty of a Chriſtian, it might be enough for me to collect the precepts and prohibitions, which God has given us in his word, and to vouch no other authority or reaſon, but his will, for them. But becauſe every man's duty will probably make the greater impreſſion upon his mind, when he is ſatisfied as to the reaſonableneſs of it, as well as convinced of its obligation; I ſhall endeavour, as I proceed, firſt, to infer as much of our duty as I can, from the nature and circumſtances of things and perſons; and then to ſuperadd, where there is occaſion, what God has poſitively ordained and commanded as to any point; and this with the ſame conciſeneſs that I have obſerved in my ſecond Part, neither enlarging upon

thoſe arguments, nor reciting thoſe texts of Scripture, which I ſuppoſe my reader to be able to call to mind upon the leaſt hint of them.

II. To begin then: Since God is the moſt perfect and excellent Being in himſelf, and ſo loving and beneficent to us, it follows, that *we ought to love him in the higheſt degree that poſſibly we can*; and true and complete love, as it is an act of one perſon exerted towards another, as its object, conſiſts in an unfeigned deſire, firſt, of always doing what may be truly grateful and acceptable to the perſon beloved; and ſecondly, of enjoying and being with him as much as may be. The more ardent and zealous we are in our love to God, the better, undoubtedly, it is; and we ſhould ſtrive to engage our affections, as well as our reaſon and our will, unto Him, from whom we have received all things. But yet this love is not to be meaſured, or judged of, by the earneſtneſs of thoſe ſudden motions, which ſometimes may ariſe within us, upon the contemplation

tion of God's excellency and goodneſs; becauſe to be thus *paſſionately* affected is not wholly in our power; and ſometimes leaſt ſo, when we moſt earneſtly deſire it. But the true and certain way of judging whether we love God or not, is, by examining whether we are ſteadfaſt in our reſolutions, and accordingly diligent in our endeavours, conſtantly to obey him, and keep all his commandments; which is the only way to pleaſe, and conſequently to enjoy, and for ever be with him. And where the love of God is thus firmly rooted in the *will*, and brings forth plenty of fruit in the life and actions, it is certainly nevertheleſs acceptable to him, although it does not ſo paſſionately move our affections, as we could wiſh or deſire. And as all the duties, which we owe unto Almighty God, are derived from, and do depend upon, that of loving of him, or rather, indeed, are contained in it; ſo is it very evident, that they are all to be judged of by the ſame forementioned rule; that is to ſay, not ſo much by the ſtrength of an inward impulſe upon the mind, (which is a thing

a thing not under our command) as by the ſteady agreeableneſs of our will and actions unto all ſuch principles as are right and good.

III. Since God is the moſt excellent and perfect, and conſequently the moſt worthy, of all Beings that are or can be; from hence it will follow, that *we ought to honour him with the greateſt honour that may be.* Now to honour any perſon, is, in other words, inwardly to eſteem, and outwardly to ſhew our reſpect to him. Our inward eſteem of *God* conſiſts in a due acknowledgment of his being and attributes; and our outward reſpect to him is to be ſhewn, as well by abſtaining from all actions which may ſavour of any neglect or irreverence towards him, as by performing all ſuch as may appear to be ſuitable, both to his own excellency and our dependance upon him.

IV. Since God is preſent in all places, and knows all, even the moſt ſecret things; and therefore cannot poſſibly be deceived,

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or impoſed on; *we ſhould*, on this conſideration, *be very watchful and careful, upon all occaſions, how we behave ourſelves in his preſence:* and, methinks, it is a moſt ſhameful and deplorable thing, that men commonly ſcruple not to do thoſe things in the ſight of *God*, which they would be afraid or aſhamed ſhould be known, or even ſuſpected of them, by men like themſelves.

V. Since God is moſt true, from hence it will follow, that *we ought to believe whatſoever he ſays or makes known*, how improbable ſoever otherwiſe it might ſeem to us. But the true eſtimate of ſuch belief is not to be made by the clearneſs and ſtrength of our ſpeculative aſſent unto thoſe truths, which he has propoſed to our underſtanding, (for to receive a truth without any doubts or ſcruples, which ſometimes do unaccountably force themſelves upon us, even in the cleareſt caſes, is not always in our power,) but rather by the conſtant ſuitableneſs of our lives unto the profeſſion of ſuch doctrines as we receive

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and own. And he who has but a weak faith, and yet leads a good life, although he is not qualified for doubtful diſputations, is nevertheleſs a true believer; becauſe his belief anſwers the main end and deſign of the Goſpel; which I have ſhewn to be virtue and morality, Part I. §. 42. Nor can there, for example, be a better evidence, that a man does really and ſufficiently believe the truth of a life to come, than when he is induſtrious and diligent in preparing for it; whatever doubts or ſcruples he may have in point of ſpeculation about it.

VI. Since God's power is infinite, and his authority uncontrollable, it follows, that *we ought to fear him*, (and ſo much the more, becauſe of our natural propenſity to ſin,) becauſe he has it always in his power to make us miſerable here, and eternally ſo hereafter. But he cannot be ſaid to fear God moſt, (that is, moſt truly,) who is poſſeſſed with the greateſt dread and terror at the thoughts of his wrath or judgments; for then the devils, who tremble,

ble, or wicked wretches, who deſpair of God's mercy, would be the beſt performers of this duty. But he is the trueſt fearer of God, who always takes the greateſt care not to offend him; the fear of him being never originally deſigned to torment and diſquiet our minds; but only to be ſuch a check upon us, as to keep us in due awe and obedience.

VII. Since every ſin is an offence, both againſt a gracious and a powerful God, and of very dangerous conſequence to the perſon who commits it, and ſince nothing can poſſibly be concealed from God, it follows, that *we ought to be* deeply concerned, and *truly ſorrowful for every ſin which we commit, and* by no means to palliate or frame excuſes for them, but *freely to own and confeſs them to Him.* But the truth of this ſorrow is not to be meaſured by the paſſionateneſs of it, or the tears which it produces, (which, though ſometimes good ſigns, yet too often produce but little effect,) but by the hearty reformation of life that follows. And he only can

can be ſaid, to any purpoſe, either to be ſorry for his ſins, or to confeſs them to God, who is careful for the time to come to forſake them.

VIII. Since God is almighty, he is certainly able; and ſince he loves us, he cannot but be willing to do every thing that is beſt and fitteſt for us, if we, by our own faults, do not provoke him to the contrary: from whence it follows, that, as long as we ſerve him faithfully, *we ought, in all our wants and exigencies, to truſt and rely upon him.* And if he does not relieve or help us in ſuch a manner as we deſire, *we ought to bear whatever afflictions we lie under, patiently and contentedly*; as well knowing, that God takes no delight in grieving us; but only corrects and keeps us under, in order to our eternal good. And to demonſtrate our truſt in God, and ſubmiſſion to his chaſtizing hand, we muſt never attempt by any unlawful means to ſupply any of our wants, or free ourſelves from any, even the moſt grievous preſſures: although, at the ſame time, honeſt labour

labour and induſtry (yet ſtill with ſubmiſſion to God's will) for the compaſſing of any thing which is lawful and good, is not only allowed, but commended and required.

IX. But ſince God is a free agent, and ſince all the good which we have, or are capable of, comes from him, and depends altogether on his power and over-ruling providence, *we ought to pray to him for whatſoever we ſtand in need of*, and that he would bleſs all our honeſt labours with ſucceſs. But becauſe, often, if we had the very things which we deſire, they would, at the laſt, tend to our hurt; and becauſe he knows what is fit for us, much better than we ourſelves; therefore *we ought always to pray, that his will ſhould ever take place, rather than our own*. And ſince we can have no reaſon to doubt of his love, we ought to aſſure ourſelves, that we ſhall receive either the very things we pray for, or elſe that which is altogether as good for us, if our ſins obſtruct it not.

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X. And the very ſame conſiderations, which prompt us to make our prayers to God in all our wants, do ſufficiently demonſtrate, that *we ought to return thanks unto him for all the bleſſings which we have received:* amongſt which, thoſe afflictions which have at any time reclaimed us from ſin, and brought us to a ſenſe of our duty, ought, I think, to be placed in the chiefeſt rank. And the only demonſtration of a truly thankful heart to God, is the making a pious and honeſt uſe, to his glory, of all thoſe bleſſings which we daily receive from him: nor can there be any thing more abſurd, than for a man to pretend to give God thanks with his lips, who does not alſo do it more to the purpoſe in his life.

XI. As God's juſtice and veracity are a reaſon beyond exception, why *we ſhould without anxiety depend on all his promiſes*; ſo the great promiſe which he has made us, being that of everlaſting happineſs; for our more effectual attaining unto which, he has ſent his Son, our Saviour Chriſt Jeſus,

Jeſus, to ſuffer for us; *it is* therefore accordingly *our duty to hope for eternal ſalvation*; that is to ſay, to expect the performance of what God has promiſed, and the enjoyment of what Chriſt has purchaſed for us. But this hope is to be ſhewn, not by the ſtrength of our confidence that we ſhall be ſaved, (in which it is very poſſible that a man may deceive himſelf) but by our conſtant care in duly performing what God requires on our part, in order to ſalvation: for he only who is diligent in doing the work, does with any reaſon expect, or hope for, the promiſed reward.

XII. As *we are obliged* to pray unto God for all that we want, and to hope for eternal ſalvation from him; ſo the holy Scripture directs us *to ground all our hopes of happineſs upon the ſufferings of Jeſus Chriſt, and to offer up all our prayers in his name*, as hoping only for his ſake to be accepted, who is repreſented as our only Mediator and Interceſſor with God. Whoſoever, therefore, offers to join the merits,

mediation, or interceſſion of any ſaint, together with Chriſt Jeſus, either to ſtrengthen his hopes of ſalvation, or to make his devotions more ſurely to be accepted by God; as he ſeems to diſtruſt the mediation of Chriſt, as if, alone, it were imperfect and inſufficient; ſo he acts not only without any warrant from, but even contrary to, the plain tenour of the holy Scriptures.

XIII. That it is abſurd to attempt, and impoſſible to make any bodily or viſible picture or image to repreſent God, who is both incorporeal and inviſible, is moſt evident beyond doubt or denial: and when any ſuch repreſentations are made with that deſign, and expoſed to the view of the people, the natural conſequence of them muſt needs be, to beget wrong notions of God in the minds, at leaſt, of the more ignorant ſort: for ſuch as any thing is repreſented to them, ſuch they will be apt to conceive it in all points to be. My reaſon therefore alone would ſufficiently conclude, that *it is unlawful to make any*

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ſort of picture or image to repreſent God, although he had not ſo poſitively forbid it in the holy Scripture, nor ſo expreſsly declared himſelf a jealous God in that particular.

XIV. In all caſes, where one man may deceive another to his great damage, it is reaſonable that he, who apprehends ſuch danger, ſhould not depend upon another man, except he firſt has good ſecurity given him of his truth and fidelity. Now, many times the beſt, or indeed the only ſecurity, which can be given in ſuch caſes, is a ſolemn appeal to Almighty God, (who is the ſearcher of all hearts, and the puniſher of all wickedneſs,) as expecting and freely offering one's ſelf to his wrath and vengeance, in caſe he prevaricates in what he aſſerts or promiſes: and this is what we call by the name of an *oath*. And ſince he who takes an oath (I mean with due ſerioufneſs and conſideration) does therein make an evident acknowledgment of ſome of the principal attributes of God, viz. his omniſcience, juſtice, truth, and

power, it follows, that *an oath, duly taken*, is an act of honour and reverence towards God, and, conſequently, *is not*, in itſelf, *unlawful, or evil.* But *if an oath be taken raſhly or unadviſedly, or unneceſſarily, or in trivial caſes, it is* a leſſening and undervaluing of the Divine Majeſty, (which ought always to be treated with the profoundeſt reverence) and, conſequently, *ſinful* and unlawful. And this is all that I can conceive to be forbidden by our bleſſed Saviour, Matt. v. 34. Nor can I apprehend that that place contains an univerſal prohibition of all ſwearing whatſoever: for, beſides that the very context in the preceding verſe does moſt evidently limit the diſcourſe to ſuch oaths as are purely voluntary, and therefore altogether unneceſſary, there is neither reaſon nor precedent to induce any one to believe, that our Saviour would univerſally forbid any thing, which has nothing of evil or malignity in its nature: and ſome even of the beſt of men, not only before, but ſince the coming of Chriſt, and even the bleſſed angels themſelves, we are aſſured

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in Scripture, have ſworn upon ſome occaſions with great ſolemnity. Nor do the holy Scriptures, in other places, where mention is made of the taking of an oath, ſpeak of it as a thing unlawful, or forbidden, or any way univerſally evil in itſelf, but altogether the contrary: nor did our bleſſed Saviour, that we can find, deſign to deprive princes or magiſtrates of any part of that lawful power, which they had over their ſubjects before his coming; who every where were inveſted with a right of exacting an oath from them, when it ſhould be neceſſary, either for the peace and ſecurity of the commonwealth, or for the ending of differences between private parties. And as for that paſſage of St. James v. 12. which is by ſome urged againſt ſwearing in any caſe whatſoever; it being no more but a recapitulation of our Saviour's words, which were juſt now mentioned, needs no other anſwer than what I have already given. But ſince the very nature and deſign of an oath is to invoke God, that thereby a man may give aſſurance to another of his

truth and fidelity, it follows, that *to affirm any thing upon oath, beyond what the man, who ſwears, knows to be true; or not to perform what he has upon his oath promiſed, is a ſin.* And ſince he, who impoſes upon another by doubtful and equivocal words, does as much deceive him, as he who ſpeaks a downright falſity; from hence it will follow, that ſuch *a deceitful oath is* altogether as contrary to the nature and deſign of an oath, and, conſequently, as *unlawful* as a falſe one. But although *an oath lays an obligation upon a man to do whatever he has ſworn*, yet, *if a man ſwears to do any thing which is a ſin*, and contrary to ſome former obligation, under which he indiſpenſably lies to God or man, *he cannot in this caſe be obliged to keep his oath*, but is bound to repent of it. For, beſides that it is not reaſonable, that any man's own act ſhould free him from any obligation under which he lies to another, it is plain, that an oath can neither alter the nature of a ſin, nor make it lawful to commit it. And ſince the deſign of an oath in its own nature is to oblige him

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to performance that takes it; and ſince the name of God ought never unneceſſarily to be invoked; it follows, that *where a man ought not to keep an oath, he ought not on any account to take it.*

XV. According to the cuſtoms of different places, there have divers ceremonies and forms of words been introduced in the taking of an oath; ſome of them grounded upon reaſon, and others taken up through miſtake in imitation. Thus, probably, whereas it may have been a cuſtom in ſome places in an oath, to invoke the vengeance of God upon one's *head*; from hence, likely, might ariſe that form of ſwearing by the head, and, in imitation thereof, by the hand, or other parts of the body. And whereas it was uſual to take ſolemn oaths in extraordinary caſes in the temple, or at the altar, and, with us at this time, laying the hand upon the holy Scriptures; from hence might ariſe the forms of ſwearing by the temple, the altar, the Bible, &c. But here it muſt be noted, that the nature of an

oath being for aſſurance, and conſiſting therefore altogether in the intention of the parties, viz. as well of him who requires it, as of him who gives it; *he may be ſaid really and truly to ſwear*, not only who makes uſe of ſuch a form and ceremony as is accuſtomed or preſcribed in any certain place, but he *who any ways ſignifies to another an intention to oblige himſelf under the penalty of God's wrath and vengeance:* and, for the ſame reaſon, *the joint intention of both parties*, as it appears fairly to be ſignified, (without any place for fraud or colluſion) *muſt needs be the true meaſure of the obligation of every oath.*

XVI. When a man promiſes a thing, and obliges himſelf thereto, not to any other man, but only to God alone; this is what is commonly called a *vow*; and *comes* ſo exactly *under the ſame rules with a promiſſory oath*, (as will preſently appear to whoſoever reads the foregoing ſections) that I need not again particularly repeat them. But it is a very neceſſary caution to be ob-

obſerved in all oaths, and more eſpecially to be taken care of in vows, that *a man ſhould never voluntarily oblige himſelf to any thing but what he is well aſſured is within his power to perform*; I mean, with the help of that common aſſiſtance and grace, which God has promiſed to all that ſeek it. For if a man goes beyond this, and ties ſuch burdens upon himſelf as he is not ſufficiently ſure of ſtrength to bear; beſides the preſumption of the thing, it muſt needs involve his conſcience in many difficulties and perplexities.

XVII. Since there is no other being whatſoever, which for power, goodneſs, or excellency of nature, can any way be equalled to or compared with Almighty God; from hence it will follow, that all *theſe foregoing duties, which we owe unto God* on the account and ſuppoſition of the tranſcendency of his nature and attributes, *are not any of them to be paid unto any thing or perſon beſides himſelf*. For that would be in effect to ſet up ſomewhat elſe as a God, or in the place of God, unto our-

ourſelves. Let them then who ſeem either to love, or fear, or truſt in any thing or perſon as much or more than God, and who offer up their prayers and devotions unto any ſaints or angels; which ſeems to ſuppoſe their omniſcience, and that they know the ſecrets of men's hearts, and to argue ſome diſtruſt of God's goodneſs and readineſs to hear us;—let them, I ſay, and ſuch like perſons, conſider well with themſelves, how they can anſwer theſe things to God, who is a jealous God. But ſince *every man*, who is ſincere in Religion, *muſt neceſſarily ſuit his worſhip and duty to God according to the apprehenſions which he has of the Deity*; he who is convinced of the diſtinction of Perſons in the unity of the Godhead, (of which I have endeavoured to give my thoughts, Part II. §. 22.) *cannot*, I think, *but make the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghoſt, the joint objects of his ſervice and devotion.* And why it ſhould not be both lawful and proper to invoke the Son and Holy Ghoſt, together with the Father, in our prayers, as well as to be baptized, and to bleſs, in their

their names, together with him, (which are both, I think, acts of divine worſhip,) I confeſs I can ſee no ſound reaſon that can be given. But if any man ſhall tell me, that, in the worſhip of God, he dares proceed no farther than the holy Scriptures will expreſsly warrant, and therefore that he cannot invoke the Holy Ghoſt in his prayers, becauſe he there finds neither precept for, nor example of it, (judging no man, but leaving every man to ſtand or fall to his own maſter,) for myſelf I anſwer, that ſince God has made us reaſonable creatures, I cannot but think, that a clear and rational conſequence from Scripture is as good a warrant for any religious action, and lays as great an obligation upon him that is convinced of it, as the moſt expreſs text: and if the perſonality and divinity of the Holy Ghoſt be admitted, (as I here ſuppoſe) to me no conſequence ſeems to be clearer, than that he is to be invoked and worſhipped, together with the Father and the Son.

XVIII. Since the end, to which God de-

ſigns all men, is eternal happineſs in another life, (Part II. §. 29.) to a capacity for which we are again, after our fall, reſtored by Jeſus Chriſt, (Part II. §. 33, &c.) it follows, that *we ought not to do any thing, whereby we may miſs of this end, or be diverted from the proſecution of it; but, on the contrary, that the whole courſe of our actions and endeavours ſhould ever be bent on the purſuit of it.*

XIX. No man will ever be diligent in the purſuit of any thing, of which he ſeldom thinks, and rarely conſiders the benefit of obtaining, and the evil of miſſing it. If therefore we are obliged to be diligent in our endeavours after eternal happineſs, *we ought to make the joys of heaven and the torments of hell the ſubject of our frequent thoughts and meditations.*

XX. He who places his happineſs, or any part of it, upon a wrong object, will never be ſo diligent as he ought in the purſuit of that true happineſs, to which he is deſigned by God; becauſe the ſtream

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of his thoughts and endeavours muſt needs, in the whole, or in part, be diverted, according as he apprehends his happineſs to lie another way. Now, that there is nothing in this world, (except a good conſcience, and the hope of eternal life, which, though they may be had *in* this world, yet are not *of* the world,) that can any way make up a part of our real happineſs, is abundantly demonſtrable, from the vanity, uncertainty, and ſhortneſs of all worldly joys. He therefore, who places any part of his happineſs upon any thing belonging to this world, moſt certainly places it upon a wrong object. But whatſoever a man propoſes to himſelf as the ultimate end of any of his actions, it is certain, that therein he places ſome part, at leaſt, of his happineſs: for that, which is the ultimate end of any action of a man, muſt be propoſed as the final ſatisfaction of ſome of his deſires; (for as far as any one's deſire extends, ſo far off muſt be the end he aims at;) and no deſire of any man can ever be finally ſatisfied, till it meets with that, wherein he ſuppoſes his

his happineſs, in whole or in part, to conſiſt. From hence then it will follow, that, although there are ſome pleaſures and ſatisfactions in this world, which may innocently be enjoyed, yet *no man ought to propoſe any worldly enjoyment, as the ultimate end and deſign of any of his actions.* For this would be a placing his happineſs, or ſome part of it, upon a wrong object, and thereby a hindrance of his purſuit of the true happineſs for which God deſigns him. To illuſtrate this, which otherwiſe may ſeem obſcure, by an example or two: a man may lawfully, without doubt, reliſh the meat he eats; (for to what other end did God give us the ſenſe of taſting?) but the reaſon of his eating, at all times, ought to be to preſerve his life and health, that he may be the better able to do all thoſe things, which God requires from him, in order to his ſalvation; this being the end, for which God deſigns him, and which he therefore ought always to purſue. But he who in eating deſigns no more than to gratify his ſenſual appetite, or to pamper his body, that he may have the

the greater enjoyment of the reſt of the pleaſures of this world, acts below, or rather contrary to, the end he is deſigned for, and may juſtly be compared to the beaſts that periſh. Thus alſo a man may innocently be pleaſed to have the garment he wears decent and comely, becauſe the eye is naturally gratified with the beauty of any object. But if a man wears clothes, which are more fine and coſtly than ſome others, his reaſon ought to be, that he may not (according to the humour of the world) be contemned for the meanneſs or ſordidneſs of his apparel; but endeavour, by all fair ways, to preſerve ſuch a reſpect among men, (who are very apt to judge by the outward appearance) as may enable him to do the more good in the world. But he who clothes himſelf like the lilies of the field, or Solomon in all his glory, only that he may admire himſelf, or be taken notice of by others for his remarkable finery, is a vain perſon, and acts as fooliſhly as the crow in the fable, who clad himſelf in the peacock's feathers. And what I have here

ſaid

ſaid concerning food and raiment, may alſo be applied to riches and honour, and to all pleaſures, which are not abſolutely unlawful, and to every thing which men aim at or value in this world; which they may lawfully ſeek after, and take delight in, as far as they may be inſtruments of doing good, or are conſiſtent with their Chriſtian duty: but they muſt not place their happineſs, or any part of it, in them; for that would make them forgetful of heaven, and neceſſarily involve them in the ſins of ambition, covetouſneſs, voluptuouſneſs, &c.

XXI. As we are obliged to do whatſoever God commands, and patiently to ſuffer whatſoever he, in his providence, ſhall think fit to lay or inflict upon us; ſo, for the ſame reaſons, are we certainly bound to continue in this, both doing and patiently ſuffering, until ſuch time as he ſhall be pleaſed, of his own will, to free and diſmiſs us from it. From whence it follows, that *no man ought*, upon any account, *to lay violent hands upon himſelf, or volun-*

voluntarily contribute to the ſhortening of his own life, becauſe he knows not but that God might be willing to exerciſe him yet farther, with ſufferings or other trials, to his glory, and the good of his own ſoul. Nor ought any ſervant, without leave or licence, to withdraw himſelf from the ſervice of his maſter. And the ſame reaſon, which forbids us to deſtroy our lives, ſhould alſo keep us from putting them to any unreaſonable or unneceſſary hazard.

XXII. He who in duty is obliged to any thing, lies alſo, of neceſſity, under an obligation to qualify himſelf as well as he can, and to ſeek after and make uſe of all ſuch means and inſtruments, as are neceſſary for the better executing and compaſſing that ſame thing to which he is ſo obliged. Since then *health of body, knowledge, and underſtanding, and a competency of riches, power, and authority*, are neceſſary qualifications and inſtruments for the better performance of many of thoſe du-

ties, to which we ſtand obliged by God's law; it follows, that theſe *are things which every man, according to his capacity, ought to ſeek and endeavour after.* But we muſt not ſtrive nor ſeek for any of theſe things by ways or means that are unlawful and wicked; for that would be, beforehand, to deſtroy and fruſtrate the very end and deſign, for which alone they are to be ſought and deſired; namely, virtue, piety, and the ſervice of God.

XXIII. On the other ſide; whatſoever is an impediment or obſtacle to the performance of any neceſſary duty, we are bound, as far as we are able, to ſuppreſs or remove it out of the way. Now, our reaſon being that which firſt leads us to the knowledge of Religion, and always enables us rightly to underſtand and judge of our duty; and ſince all violent paſſions and over-eager affections do diſturb our reaſon, and very much hinder the free uſe and exerciſe of it; it follows, that *we ought always ſo to govern our paſſions, and reſtrain*

reſtrain all our affections, as that they may be wholly ſubſervient to, and never overrule or miſlead our reaſon.

XXIV. Since God is the Creator, and therefore alſo the abſolute Lord of all things, every thing certainly ought by us to be always put and applied to that very ſame end and uſe, and no other, for which it was intended by him, as far as we have any intimation of his deſign, either from reaſon or revelation. Hence then it will follow, that thoſe creatures which God has given us, to feed, ſuſtain, and keep us in health, that we may be the better able to do our duty, and labour in our ſeveral callings, ought not at any time (much leſs ordinarily) to be uſed to exceſs, ſo as to impair our health, or diſcompoſe our reaſon, or any way hinder us in the performance of any duty; and that faculty of generation, which God has endowed us with, in order to the propagation of mankind, ought not to be abuſed, for the ſake of filthy ſenſual pleaſure. Nor ought that plenty of creatures, which

God has beſtowed upon us for the ſervice of all men, without exception, to be engroſſed into the hands of any certain men, ſo as that others ſhould want the neceſſaries of life, whilſt they abound in ſuperfluity. By which it appears, that *gluttony and drunkenneſs, luſt and covetouſneſs are ſins*, and always to be avoided; and therefore, on the contrary, that *temperance, chaſtity, charity, and liberality, are duties*, and always to be practiſed.

XXV. Experience aſſures us, that the ſpirit of man is of an active nature, and, rather than be altogether idle, will be apt to employ itſelf in that which is evil. Nor does a man ever lie more open to temptation, than when he has nothing at all to do. *He*, therefore, *that would keep himſelf innocent, muſt be careful always to avoid idleneſs*. For, beſides that idleneſs would prove a ſnare to us, it is a ſhame and a ſin, when there is ſo much of God's work to be done in the world, (for the promoting of his glory, and the public good of mankind,) that any man, who pre-

pretends to be his ſervant, ſhould ſtand ſtill, and not put his helping hand to the carrying of it on. But as we cannot ſay, that a man is idle, when he lies down to ſleep, that, being thereby refreſhed, he may be the better able again to labour; ſo muſt we by no means paſs that cenſure on him, who now and then ſpends ſome ſmall portion of his time in ſome pleaſant and innocent recreation, that, having his thoughts hereby a little relaxed and diverted, he may be the fitter to return to buſineſs of moment and conſequence. But as for thoſe perſons, whoſe whole life almoſt is nothing elſe but diverſion, and who ſcarce ever ſet themſelves to any employment, whereby either God is glorified, or others benefited; what can they expect but the ſame ſentence which is pronounced upon the idle and unprofitable ſervant, Matt. xxv. 26. And if to be altogether idle and unemployed, is not to be excuſed or juſtified, how much more are they to be condemned, who are ſo frequently employed in ſuch things as are evil and ſcandalous!

XXVI. Since the right knowledge of our duty arifes chiefly from a true judgment concerning the circumftances and qualifications of things and perfons, it follows, that *every man fhould endeavour*, as far as he is able, *to inform himfelf rightly*, and to frame true notions, in all points, *of and concerning God, himfelf, and other men*; to whom there are duties owing; *and alfo of all thofe things, which are the fubjects of any of* thofe *duties*, and in the true management whereof fuch duties do confift. For if he be miftaken in his judgment concerning either of thefe, he muft of neceffity take wrong meafures in his actions. Thus, for example, if a man fhould not believe God to be eternal, moft good, wife, and powerful, &c. it would not be poffible for him to love, honour, and fear him, in that degree that he ought to do. And if we do not always remember ourfelves to be frail creatures, fubject to paffions and infirmities, of fhort continuance in this world, and that whatever excellency we may feem to have, we derive it wholly from God and his providence,

dence, and not from ourſelves; we ſhall never be able, ſo effectually as we ought, to govern our paſſions, and reſtrain our affections from the things of this world, and purſue that end for which God has deſigned us. And if we do not conſider that other men (whatever accidental differences there may be between us) are equal to us in nature, that their ſouls are as precious in God's ſight as ours, that Chriſt died for them, as much as for us, &c. we ſhall not be inclined to behave ourſelves to them with that juſtice, charity, and humility, which do evidently appear to be our duty. And laſtly, if we do not frame a true notion of the vanity of the things of this world, and the excellency of the joys of heaven, we ſhall never be able to prefer the latter before the former, in ſuch a meaſure as we ought to do.

XXVII. Although the chief happineſs of mankind is reſerved by God to be enjoyed in another life, by thoſe who heartily ſtrive for it whilſt they are in this; yet

can I find no reaſon to think, that he has decreed us all, or any of us, to be abſolutely miſerable whilſt we remain in this world. On the contrary, ſince God has originally a love for all mankind in general, (Part II. §. 16.) I cannot but conclude, that he always, even in this life, deſigns at leaſt ſome ſhare or beginning of happineſs for every man; and never afflicts, or ſuffers any man to be afflicted, but only in order to his greater happineſs hereafter; until ſuch time as he thinks it proper to pour out his vengeance and final deſtruction upon ſuch as have, by their wickedneſs, altogether forfeited his love and favour. Since then God originally deſigns ſome meaſure or commencement of happineſs to all men, even in this life, as well as eternal happineſs hereafter; it follows, that we, who ought as much as we can to be ſubſervient to all God's deſigns, ſhould endeavour, as much as in us lies, to promote the happineſs of every man, both in relation to this world, and of that which is to come. Or in other terms, that *every man ſhould endeavour to do as much*

much good to all others as he can, and to hurt no man whatſoever, if he can avoid it.

XXVIII. But if every man always kept ſingly by himſelf, without any ſociety or intercourſe with others, it would be impoſſible to do any good one to another: and therefore I conclude, that it is the will of God, that *mankind ſhould live each with other in a ſtate of ſociety*. And to make us all the more ſenſible of the neceſſity and obligation that lies upon us thus to live with and do good to others, God has ſo ordered the ſtate and condition of all mankind, that it is not poſſible for any man long to ſubſiſt, much leſs to enjoy any ſort of comfort or ſatisfaction in this life, without the good-will and aſſiſtance of others; which he has no reaſon to expect, except he be ready upon all occaſions to retaliate what he himſelf ſo continually ſtands in need of. And ſince God's original love to mankind is not confined to ſome certain perſons, but univerſally extended to all, I muſt needs conclude, that he deſigns not only the com-

comfort and happineſs of ſome particulars, but univerſally of all men whatſoever. And ſince the more univerſal the ſociety between men is, the more univerſal the happineſs which thence reſults will be; it will evidently follow, that it is God's will that every man ſhould behave himſelf after a ſociable and friendly manner to every other man, without exception. And ſince there is no man in the world, however weak and poor, or at never ſo great a diſtance from me, but it is poſſible that things may fall out, ſo as that, one time or other, I may, in my diſtreſs, ſtand in need of his help and friendſhip, my reaſon tells me, that it is my intereſt, as well as duty, as much as I am able, beforehand to oblige every man, who comes in my way, by doing offices of civility and kindneſs to him, as occaſion offers.

XXIX. That God has given to mankind in general the free liberty to make uſe of all other creatures for their ſupport and ſuſtenance, my reaſon, as well as the holy

holy Scripture, does aſſure me; becauſe, without ſome of them, we could not preſerve ourſelves in being: and if we had not liberty to deſtroy others of them for our uſe, they would in time ſo overſpread the face of the earth, as that we could not have any ſafe or convenient habitation upon it. But if all theſe creatures were always to remain in common, ſo that no man ſhould have a right to take poſſeſſion of any part of them to his own particular uſe and diſpoſal, and to exclude others therefrom, the conſequence muſt needs be perpetual diſcord and confuſion. For when I had prepared food to ſuſtain my hunger, or raiment to defend me from the cold, if every other man ſhould have ſtill as good a right thereto as I, any one might lawfully take it away from me; and if my right were as good as any others, I might alſo lawfully defend my poſſeſſion; from which ſtate of things, contention and ſtrife muſt eternally and unavoidably ariſe. I therefore conclude, that there muſt be ſome laws of property and right, and that *every man muſt yield*

to

to others, that which is their own, or elſe there can be no ſuch thing as ſociety and beneficence preſerved and kept up amongſt mankind. Now, in order to diſcover theſe ſame laws of right and property, whereby every man is to know what is truly his own, I lay down this general rule, as a thing moſt reaſonable, that, whereas originally every man's right and title to every thing may be eſteemed equal, (God having given us all the creatures in common, and not, by any act of his, divided to each man his ſeveral property,) if there be any apparent or but probable ground, why ſuch or ſuch a particular thing ſhould be the property of one man, rather than of another, that ought ſo to determine the matter, as to oblige all other men quietly to yield and ſuffer him to enjoy and uſe that ſame thing, whatever it be, as his own. For where the balance ſtands exactly even, a ſmall matter is enough to turn the ſcale to one ſide. Now, in theſe following caſes, there ſeems to be great reaſon for determining a property in a thing to particular perſons, viz. 1. When a man

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is the firſt that takes actual poſſeſſion of a thing, and converts it to his own uſe: for ſuch a poſſeſſion is an addition to his general right, beyond what any other man, who never was in poſſeſſion, can pretend. And why ſhould I part with my poſſeſſion to any other, or he demand it from me, except he were able to make out a better title than I to the thing in diſpute? 2. When a man takes poſſeſſion of a thing, which is actually rejected and deſerted by him, who laſt had the right to and poſſeſſion of it: for his caſe ſeems to be much the ſame with his, who firſt takes poſſeſſion of a thing. 3. When a thing is given, or in exchange made over to another, by him who had before a juſt right thereto: for it is highly reaſonable that every man ſhould have liberty to diſpoſe of his own. 4. When a company of people do by an agreement make a partition of what was before in common amongſt them all, it is reaſonable that every man ſhould acquieſce in that ſhare, which, upon ſuch a diviſion, ſhall fall to his lot. 5. When a man takes care and pains to pro-

produce and rear any thing for his own uſe or profit, it is reaſonable that he (and not another man againſt his conſent) ſhould enjoy the benefit of his own labour. And laſtly, where a ſociety of people do ſubmit their properties unto a legiſlative power, which is erected amongſt them, it is reaſonable that herein they ſhould always be concluded and determined by the laws of that community, of which they are members. And if there be any other rules for determining the rights of men to particular things, it is moſt evident, that due care muſt be taken to keep and obſerve them, or elſe farewell all order and ſociety.

XXX. Where fidelity is wanting, ſociety cannot be truly kept and preſerved. I therefore conclude, that *every man is obliged faithfully to perform whatever he promiſes*; except the perſon, to whom the promiſe is made, do freely acquit and diſcharge him from it. But if a man promiſes to do a thing which is ſinful, he ought not to keep ſuch a promiſe as that;

as

as I have already ſhewn in the caſe of an oath.

XXXI. And the ſame reaſons which oblige us to hurt no man, to yield to every man his right, and to keep our promiſes, do plainly ſhew, that *he who wrongfully hurts another, or deprives him of his right, or breaks his promiſe made to him, ought, as far as he is able, to make full reſtitution and ſatisfaction to the perſon whom he has thus injured.* For he that makes a breach in human ſociety, is doubtleſs obliged, as far as he can, to repair it.

XXXII. Where a propoſition is literally falſe, and yet ſpoken with no manner of intention to deceive another, it is not to be called a lie: but he who aſſerts any thing for a truth, with an intent to make another believe it, which is, or for aught he knows may be, falſe, he only is to be eſteemed a liar. Now, ſome have doubted, whether the ſin of a lie conſiſts in the bare untruth, or only in the injuſtice of it; and from thence have been inclined to believe,

believe, that ſuch a lie as does no hurt to any one, nor draws any manner of evil conſequence after it, is not to be looked on as a ſin; and ſo much the leſs, if it be told with a real deſign only to do good, or prevent miſchief. The niceties of this controverſy I leave to be diſcuſſed by others. But ſince human ſociety cannot be upheld without, in many caſes, a dependance upon one another's veracity, I may ſurely venture thus far to conclude, viz. that not only ſuch a lie as tends to the damage of another, but alſo *ſuch a lie*, however otherwiſe innocent, *as gives occaſion to render a man's truth ſuſpected in other caſes, is* to be reputed *unlawful*; if for no other reaſon, yet at leaſt for this, becauſe it is injurious to human ſociety. *And the* ſame *reaſon will hold as ſtrongly againſt all mental reſervations and equivocal expreſſions.* For what is human ſociety at any time the better for the literal truth of what a man ſays, if others, who are therein concerned, do not underſtand his true meaning by the words which he ſpeaks to them?

XXXIII.

XXXIII. It is highly reaſonable, that every man ſhould have ſuch an eſteem and reſpect ſhewed him, as may be proportionable to his virtues and good qualities: and as it is proper enough for a man by lawful ways to aſſert his own reputation, whenever it is unjuſtly aſperſed; ſo he ought to take eſpecial care in the management of all his words and actions, that he may not ſeem to exalt or magnify himſelf, or to deſpiſe or undervalue others, beyond what is not only juſt and true, but alſo neceſſary, either for the bringing about ſomething that is good, or the preventing ſomething that is evil. For there is ſcarce any thing that gives greater diſguſt, or helps to render a man more odious to the world, than an overforwardneſs to praiſe and magnify himſelf, and to undervalue others, if he be not neceſſitated thereto by ſome very juſt reaſon: and, on the contrary, there is ſcarce any thing, which reconciles a man more to the favour and good will of people, than when he is not over apt to aſcribe much to himſelf, but is ready to give the utmoſt honour

and reſpect to all others, that in reaſon can be thought due. I conclude therefore, that *pride is a ſin, and humility a duty*, becauſe the former tends to diſturb, but the latter ſtrengthens and confirms human ſociety.

XXXIV. What is incumbent upon him to do, who has done wrong to another, I have juſt now ſhewn: but if another man wrongs, or any way endeavours to injure me; as it is lawful for me (ſo for every man) to ſtand upon my defence, and uſe my utmoſt endeavours to ſave myſelf from wrong, or recover that which is my right; (for otherwiſe all the good and honeſt men in the world would continually lie expoſed to the wrongs and inſults of any evil man, who might have a mind to deſtroy them;) ſo I, and *every man ought to be ready* at any time *to be reconciled to an adverſary or enemy*; provided it may be upon ſuch terms as are conſiſtent with our own ſafety: *nor ought any man* upon any occaſion *to do any greater harm to his keeneſt enemy, than what he apprehends to be abſolutely neceſſary to his own preſervation.* For ſince

ſince ſociety and peace among mankind is the will and deſign of Almighty God; if a breach be made therein by another, I ought for my part to do nothing which may make it wider; but ever to be ready to give a helping hand to the cloſing and making up of it.

XXXV. Hitherto I have endeavoured to lay down the main and fundamental rules of that duty, which every man is obliged to pay and perform to God, to himſelf, and to all other men. Now, to deduce all the particular branches of virtue and piety from theſe main principles, and to ſhew how morality is improved and refined by the Goſpel, to the higheſt degree of perfection, is a thing not difficult to be done, but yet inconſiſtent with my deſigned brevity: for which therefore I muſt refer my reader to ſome of thoſe books of Chriſtian piety, wherein each particular of our duty is at large deſcribed and preſſed. But, in the mean time, if we would have a ſhorter abſtract of our duty than what I have now been

giving, the holy Scripture furniſhes us with three rules, (two expreſſed, and one implied,) from which every thing, that we can be obliged to do, is eaſily deduced; and they are, 1. that *we ſhould love God with all our heart, ſoul, and ſtrength*; 2. that *we ſhould truly love ourſelves*, that is to ſay, ſo as always to aim at and purſue our true and chief happineſs. And 3. that *we ſhould love others as we do ourſelves*, not with the ſame degree of love; for that is not only unreaſonable, but impoſſible; but with the ſame reality and ſincerity; or, in other terms, that *we ſhould* ever *do unto all other men what we would* think reaſonable *that they ſhould do unto us*, if we were in their circumſtances, and they in ours. But beſides theſe general duties, which are indiſcriminately incumbent upon all men, there are divers particular ones, which do ariſe from thoſe ſeveral relations, which men may contract and bear to others, of which it is fit that I give ſome brief account.

XXXVI. That God would have the gene-

generation of men continued and increaſed upon the earth, is very evident, as well from the natural inclination, which he has implanted in them (as in all other living creatures) to propagate their kind, as from that love and affection, which is common to them with other creatures towards thoſe who ſpring from them. But if mankind were propagated only by the exerciſe of wild and wandering luſt, without confinement to any ſettled rules or laws, this would bring in ſuch a deluge of confuſion and diſturbance, as would unavoidably deprive them of the greateſt part of thoſe ſatisfactions, which at the preſent they do or may enjoy. For if there were no ſuch thing as ſettled marriages, we can hardly ſuppoſe, that ever there would be any ſort of ſettled families, which are the firſt beginnings of ſociety and regularity amongſt men; fathers would not know which were their own children, and conſequently would take no care to bring them up, or provide for them; and not only the pain of bearing, but the whole trouble of nouriſhing,

rearing, and providing for children, would lie wholly upon the female ſex, who by themſelves could but very imperfectly perform that work as it ſhould be done. Since therefore God intends the comfort and ſatisfaction of men, even whilſt they are here upon earth, I conclude, that it is his will, that *mankind ſhould be propagated no other way but by ſettled marriages*, that is, by a compact and agreement between the male and female, and that under ſuch rules as are fit and proper to promote the general happineſs of mankind, which being his great deſign ought ever alſo to be ours.

XXXVII. That a woman ſhould have more than one huſband at a time, is notoriouſly contrary to the deſign of marriage, and therefore directly unlawful: and that a man ſhould have more than one wife at a time, the experience of many, in former ages, and at this time in the eaſtern countries, does ſufficiently teſtify to be contrary to that peace and quietneſs, which is neceſſary to the comfort and happineſs of every

every family; and therefore not ſo agreeable to that univerſal friendſhip, which ought ever to be preſerved amongſt men, but eſpecially among thoſe, who are ſo nearly allied together. Moreover, if men and their wives ſhould have liberty to part one from the other, whenever they pleaſe, (beſides the confuſion and diſturbance, which this alſo muſt breed in families, eſpecially where there are children in the caſe,) marriage would hardly differ from that wild and wandering luſt, againſt which I have ſpoken in the preceding paragraph. I conclude, therefore, that although, before the coming of Chriſt, if a man took more wives than one, not for luſt, (which is unlawful, §. 24.) but merely for propagation, it might in ſome caſes be diſpenſed with; yet it ever was moſt pleaſing to God, that a man ſhould have but one wife at a time; and that nothing but death ſhould ever part a man and his wife; except the evil behaviour of one party ſhould make the continuance of the marriage compact and cohabitation, not only ſomething uneaſy, (for that for

peace and quietneſs ſake ſhould be borne patiently) but downright intolerable. But theſe things, which reaſon may perhaps but imperfectly ſuggeſt, the Goſpel has paſſed and eſtabliſhed into laws, viz. that *as every woman is to have but one huſband, ſo no man muſt have more than one wife, at a time*; *nor muſt any thing part man and wife but death*, except it be the caſe of adultery: and better much it is, that particular perſons ſhould ſometimes be forced to labour under ſome inconvenience, than that any ſuch liberty ſhould be allowed, as tends to diſturb and diſtract the world.

XXXVIII. We generally find, that all men, even Heathens, as well as Jews and Chriſtians, have conceived a more than ordinary abhorrence againſt the marriage of ſuch perſons as were very nearly allied together, within ſome certain degrees of relation. And ſince the world is wide enough for a man to chooſe a wife, or a woman a huſband, thoſe general rules, which are given to us in Scripture, of providing for things honeſt, not only in the

the ſight of God, but of men alſo, and of taking care, not only about ſuch things as are juſt and honeſt, but alſo about ſuch as are lovely and of good report, ſhould teach us, that *no perſon ſhould engage in ſuch a marriage, as is by wiſe men commonly reputed to be inceſtuous and unlawful.*

XXXIX. Since the relation of huſband and wife is wholly owing to the mutual compact and agreement, which is made between them at their marriage, the duties which reſult from that relation can be no other but the faithful keeping and obſerving of that ſame compact and agreement, the conditions of which may be more or fewer, according as the parties ſhall think convenient. But theſe are always neceſſary, and muſt never be wanting, viz. that *the huſband and wife muſt ſincerely love each other, muſt be ſtrictly faithful to each other's bed,* (without which, mutual love can never be preſerved entire,) *and* Chriſtianity expreſsly adds, what reaſon perhaps does alſo obſcurely ſuggeſt,

geſt, that *the wife muſt be ſubject and obedient to her huſband.*

XL. When children are begotten and brought forth into the world, it is not reaſonable, nor agreeable to God's deſign, that they ſhould periſh and die for want of care to be taken of them. Nor are there any perſons, upon whom a greater obligation can lie to bring up children, than upon thoſe who begat them, and were the cauſe of their being: and ſince God intends not the miſery and affliction, but generally the comfort and ſatisfaction of mankind upon earth, as well as their happineſs hereafter in heaven, I conclude, that *it is ever the duty of parents to take the beſt care they can to bring up their children, and to promote their true happineſs*, both in this world, and that which is to come. For which reaſon we muſt needs ſuppoſe them to be veſted with a lawful power of governing and chaſtiſing them, as far as is neceſſary to keep them in good and regular order.

XLI.

XLI. And on the other ſide, ſince children are beholding to their parents, even for their very being, whereby they are capacitated, not only for the enjoyment of the ſatisfactions of this life, but alſo for eternal happineſs in the world to come, it is highly reaſonable, that they *ſhould love their parents with a very high degree of affection*, and ſhould always be ready to make them the beſt returns of duty and ſervice that they can. And according as parents have been careful in bringing up and making proviſion for their children, ſo the children's love and affection ought ſtill more and more to be returned and expreſſed towards them.

XLII. Where parents, by death or otherwiſe, are rendered incapable of nouriſhing and breeding up a child; or where they utterly forſake and expoſe him to the wide world, before he is able to provide for or take care of himſelf; if another perſon takes him, and maintains and puts him in a way of living, ſuch *a child is* in all reaſon *obliged to pay a proportion-*

portionable ſhare of filial love and duty to him, who has performed the part of a parent to him.

XLIII. It is not pretended, that ever any perſon, or family, by name, were ever, by God's particular and revealed appointment, inveſted with the power of governing over ſuch or ſuch a certain people, excepting only the caſe of the people of *Iſrael*; I therefore conclude, that however *the magiſtracy, which is lawfully eſtabliſhed throughout the world*, is ordained of God, it *is not by immediate revelation from heaven.*

XLIV. Whether a parent, by the law of nature, has the power of a ſupreme magiſtrate over his own children, is not neceſſary here to enquire. But I ſee no ground in reaſon or nature, to judge that the eldeſt ſon of any kindred ſucceſſively ſhould have the ſame power over his brothers and ſiſters, (who are no way beholding to him for their being, nor, it may be, for their well-being,) and much leſs over his

his father's brothers and ſiſters, as the common parent of a whole family may have over all that ſpring from him. I conclude therefore, that *lawful magiſtracy is not to be derived by the law of nature from the alone right of primogeniture*; nor do we ever meet with any prince in hiſtory, who derived his authority from this only fountain; and if this were the true right and title of magiſtracy, it would follow, that all the world ought to be but one monarchy; and Adam's heir male the emperor thereof; and all the kings and emperors that ever were, whoſe titles were originally bottomed upon another foundation, were no better than mere uſurpers.

XLV. Where one man conquers another, that is to ſay, by force of arms, or by ſtratagem, gets him ſo into his power, as that he can deſtroy or kill him at his pleaſure; the conquered perſon, indeed being obliged to do all that honeſtly he can for the preſervation of his own life, ought, on that account, to uſe his beſt en-

endeavours, by an obſequious demeanour, to aſſuage and pacify the fury of the conqueror. But, farther than he finds neceſſary to his own preſervation, he is not obliged to obey the conqueror, except he binds himſelf thereto by ſome act of his own; there being no law of God or nature, which lays any farther obligation on him in that caſe, but only to preſerve himſelf, without doing wrong to another. Since then all the world does allow, that a ſubject is bound to obey the magiſtrate, who is lawfully ſet over him, even in thoſe caſes where no danger, in this world, would attend his diſobedience, or, as the Apoſtle expreſſes it, *not only for wrath, but alſo for conſcience ſake*; it will follow, that *conqueſt alone*, without any compact or agreement, *does not eſtabliſh the conqueror a lawful magiſtrate over the conquered people*. For if it did, there could be no difference between a liege ſubject and a priſoner of war.

XLVI. If any man unjuſtly invades the property, or attempts the life of another, it

it is lawful for him, to whom the wrong is offered, to defend himſelf the beſt he can; and if he has no other way of ſecuring himſelf, nor can prevail with his enemy to deſiſt from his evil deſign, the neceſſity of preſerving himſelf from death, or (which may be as bad, or worſe) from ruin, will certainly juſtify the killing of him. For otherwiſe the lives and fortunes of all honeſt men muſt for ever be expoſed to the arbitrary pleaſure of every lawleſs and wicked perſon, which is contrary to that comfort and ſatisfactory ſtate, which we ſuppoſe God generally to deſign for men, even in this life. And that which is allowable for every ſingle man to do for himſelf, is ſurely no leſs lawful for a ſociety of men combining together, to do for their joint and mutual ſafety. Moreover, if in ſuch a ſociety any perſon be taken in, or after, ſuch an unlawful attempt, it is lawful for them to puniſh him in ſuch a manner (whether by death or otherwiſe) as may be neceſſary to terrify others from doing the like for the time to come: for without this, there could

could be no ſecurity againſt evil-doers; who might contrive to act their miſchief ſo ſecretly, as not to be killed, or even reſiſted in the very fact itſelf. But if ſuch a ſociety have not certain laws and rules to proceed by in all ſuch caſes, and ſome certain perſons to put thoſe laws in execution, every man would take upon him to be his own judge; and what might ſeem fit and reaſonable to one, might appear otherwiſe to another of a contrary intereſt, from whence perpetual factions and confuſion muſt needs follow. But there is no reaſon that any one, or more, of ſuch a ſociety, without the conſent of the reſt, ſhould take upon them to make laws for, or exerciſe authority over, the whole community. For if it were in every man's power to make himſelf a magiſtrate, all might ſet up to be rulers, and few or none would be ſubjects; which would bring in confuſion, and deſtroy the ſociety. But when the whole ſociety do agree and conſent, that ſuch certain perſons ſhall have the exerciſing of ſuch certain powers, (which originally are in the body of

of the ſociety itſelf) it is then lawful for thoſe perſons to act accordingly; and they, who have conſented to their authority, are, by virtue of that conſent, obliged to pay obedience to them. I conclude therefore, that *the original of magiſtrates is from the conſent of the people*, ſince there is no other ſolid ground, that I can find, upon which to eſtabliſh them. *And when once a legiſlative and executive power is thus ſettled and eſtabliſhed* by the conſent of a people, who acquieſce in it, and upon all occaſions take ſhelter under its protection, it is to be looked upon as ratified and confirmed by God's own appointment; and *ſubjection and obedience is* accordingly *to be paid to it* by every particular perſon, who abides within the precincts of its juriſdiction. For this was the very caſe of the Roman government, which was in St. Paul's time; and there is exactly the ſame reaſon for it in all other kingdoms and commonwealths whatſoever.

XLVII. Since then magiſtracy derives itſelf wholly from the conſent of the people; from hence it will follow, that *the original rule of the magiſtrate's power and the ſubject's obedience is* that conſent, which the people have given, or, in other terms, *thoſe laws and conſtitutions of the place, in which the body of the nation have acquieſced:* beyond which, neither any magiſtrate ought to command, nor is any ſubject bound to obey. For where there is no law, there can be no tranſgreſſion, nor any obligation to obedience; nor conſequently any right to command.

XLVIII. But *if the legiſlative power of any nation do enact any thing, which is contrary to the expreſs law of God, or the eternal laws of good and evil, no particular man can be bound to obey ſuch a conſtitution.* For the authority of God ought to weigh more with us, than that of any community whatſoever; and it is expreſsly ruled in Scripture, that we ought to obey God rather than man.

XLIX.

XLIX. And the ſame reaſon (viz. ſelf-preſervation) which allows a ſociety, thus ſettled into a government, to puniſh male-factors within themſelves, muſt alſo juſtify them, if by force of arms they defend themſelves againſt any foreign enemy, which would wrong or oppreſs them; or endeavour to recover their right from thoſe who have taken it from them, and refuſe to reſtore it. For otherwiſe it were in vain for a community to hope to ſubſiſt by maintaining good order and diſcipline at home, if all the while they muſt, without remedy, lie continually expoſed to the wrongs and inſults of every enemy, which may aſſault them from abroad. I conclude therefore, that *war, whether defenſive or offenſive, may, in many caſes, be very juſt and lawful:* nor is there the leaſt word, throughout the holy Scriptures, which may repreſent the profeſſion of a *ſoldier*, who fights under a lawful authority, as any way contrary to religion and a good conſcience: though ſuch a man certainly *ought not only to exerciſe his calling with as much mildneſs and humanity*

manity as can be conſiſtent with the ſervice of his country; but alſo ever to ſatisfy himſelf firſt of the lawfulneſs of the cauſe, in which he engages, *before he draws his ſword in the quarrel:* for as we are obliged to do no hurt to any man whatſoever, if we can avoid it; ſo, for the very ſame reaſon, ought we not to become inſtrumental in any wrong or injuſtice, which another man (let him be who he will) intends to do.

L. That *an humble demeanour, together with a reaſonable diligence, and an honeſt fidelity to his maſter, is the duty of every ſervant*, is moſt apparent; becauſe if a ſervant be either haughty, negligent, or unfaithful, he ceaſes in effect to be a ſervant. And on the other ſide, that *juſtice and humanity are* no leſs *the duty of a maſter towards his ſervant*, is altogether as clear, becauſe where theſe are not obſerved, the condition of a ſervant muſt be intolerable, and contrary to that comfortable ſtate, which we ſuppoſe God to deſign for all men, and therefore for ſervants,

vants, who are as much men, and as much valued by God, and for whom Chriſt died, as well as for their maſters.

LI. That *all Chriſtians* are, or (according to Chriſt's inſtitution) *ought to be, combined together into one ſociety*, which is called *the Church*, I have already ſaid, Part II. §. 40. Now, in all ſuch incorporated ſocieties, theſe three things are ever to be conſidered, 1. What is the deſign of the perſon or perſons, who firſt gather and inſtitute them? 2. What advantage accrues to thoſe, who become members of them? And 3. What are the laws and rules to be obſerved by the whole body, and every member of it? The deſign of our Saviour Jeſus Chriſt, who, at the will of his heavenly Father, inſtituted and embodied the Chriſtian Church, was to purify unto himſelf a peculiar people, zealous of good works; or, in other terms, by this incorporation ſo made, more effectually to promote the practice of virtue and godlineſs in the world. The benefit and advantage, which every true member of this

Church may propoſe to himſelf, is the participation of God's grace and aſſiſtance here for the better performance of his duty, and the enjoyment of everlaſting happineſs hereafter; both which are promiſed to us by God, in and through Chriſt Jeſus our Saviour. And laſtly, the laws of the Chriſtian Church are either, 1. the general laws of piety and morality, of which I have hitherto been giving an account; or, 2. ſuch particular conſtitutions as are proper to it, conſidered as a congregated and incorporated body of men, which I have reſerved to be treated of in the laſt place of all.

LII. *The firſt thing which is incumbent on every man, as* (or rather, *in order to become*) *a member of the Chriſtian Church, is to be baptized* in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghoſt; which ceremony is intended to put us in mind of that purity and cleanneſs from ſin, to which we ought to bring our ſouls, by a virtuous and holy life. And although to wet or waſh the body with water, may ſeem

ſeem but a ſlight and inconſiderable thing, yet, ſince our Saviour Chriſt has expreſsly appointed and commanded it, and ſince his apoſtles were always moſt careful to perform it; inſomuch that even they, who had received the extraordinary gift of the Holy Ghoſt from heaven, were yet required to be baptized, in order to become viſible members of the Church; this ceremony, I think, ought not to be left off, or diſcontinued. Although whether it be performed by dipping the body under the water, or by ſprinkling the water upon it, to me ſeems to be altogether indifferent, and to be regulated only by prudence, or the cuſtom of particular places. For neither does the word *baptize* ſignify any more than to waſh, which may be done either way; nor does it appear that the apoſtles dipped all thoſe whom they baptized. Moreover, ſince ſprinkling, as well as dipping, may ſufficiently denote the waſhing and cleanſing of the ſoul from ſin; and ſince baptiſm is not expreſsly, in the holy Scripture, determined to either of theſe ways, to the excluſion of the

other; I conclude, that God has left the matter, ſo far, indifferent to us; and to be ordered according to prudence, as the circumſtances of things and perſons ſhall at any time direct: and as long as the ſubſtance and deſign of his command is carefully retained, I ſee no neceſſity of being ſo very ſolicitous about a circumſtance of it; except it could evidently be made appear, that he had appointed and determined it.

LIII. Since then baptiſm is as the entrance or door of admittance into the Church of Chriſt, it will follow, that all they, and they only, who are duly qualified to be members of his Church, are fit to have baptiſm adminiſtered to them. If any perſon has been brought up out of the Church, until he comes to years of underſtanding and knowledge, he is then, and only then, qualified to be a member of the Church, when, having repented of all his former ſins, he believes and owns, that Jeſus is the Chriſt, the Son of God, and conſequently receives and profeſſes

feſſes that faith and doctrine, which he has taught and authorized, and obliges himſelf to live according to all thoſe laws and rules, which he has preſcribed to us; this being the very condition, which our Saviour indiſpenſably requires from his Church, and every member of it, according as they are capable of performing it. But if a child be born of Chriſtian parents, or is ſo in the hands of Chriſtian guardians, as that it is in their power to bring him up in the true Religion; and they do promiſe and engage ſo to educate him; ſuch a child as this, even before he comes to any knowledge of things, is yet qualified to be a member of the Church of Chriſt, (upon the preſumption that he will perform what God requires from him, when he comes to be capable of it,) and ſo to continue, if by apoſtaſy or wickedneſs he does not, in proceſs of time, ſeparate himſelf again from it. For this, beyond diſpute, was the caſe of infants before the coming of Chriſt, who at eight days old (if males) were to be circumciſed, and thereby admitted into the Church

Church of God, and within his covenant, if they were either the ſons or ſervants born in the houſe of believing perſons, and who, as well as their parents, are expreſsly ſaid to enter into covenant with God, which is but another expreſſion for becoming of his Church. And no one ſurely will offer to ſay, that the caſe of infants is made worſe than it was, by our Saviour's coming into the world; eſpecially, ſince he has expreſsly commanded, that little children ſhould come unto him, and not be forbidden; for that of ſuch is the kingdom, that is, the Church of God. I conclude therefore, that not only *adult perſons, who make a due profeſſion of their faith and repentance*; but *alſo ſuch infants as are in a way of being brought up in the Chriſtian Religion, are*, without any obſtacle, *to be admitted to baptiſm.*

LIV. There are ſome paſſages in the New Teſtament, which ſeem plainly to ſuggeſt to us, that it was a conſtant cuſtom with the apoſtles of Chriſt, to lay their hands upon all ſuch as had been bap-

baptized, (which laying on of hands was undoubtedly accompanied with prayer to God) in order to their receiving the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit of God: but that this was a thing poſitively preſcribed and commanded, I do not find clearly proved: and therefore, although I dare not haſtily condemn thoſe particular Churches, where this ſame cuſtom is diſuſed or intermitted; yet, ſince the grace and aſſiſtance of the Holy Ghoſt, in order to the leading of a good life, and obtaining eternal happineſs, is for ever continued unto the Church, as I have ſaid, Part II. §. 42. and therefore ought ever to be ſought for, (although the working of miracles, and ſpeaking of all languages, without learning them, be ceaſed from amongſt us,) I cannot but conclude, that the laying on of hands upon perſons that have been baptized, together with prayer to God for their growth and continuance in grace, which is commonly called *confirmation, is a prudent and godly cuſtom, and ever fit to be continued in the Church.*

LV.

LV. As every particular man whatſoever is obliged, in his own private perſon, to honour and worſhip God; ſo *the Church, being a ſociety incorporated for the better ſerving of God, is under an obligation* to do the ſame in her aſſociated capacity; that is to ſay, *to aſſemble together for his worſhip*. And becauſe the whole number of Chriſtians, which are diſperſed over the face of the earth, are not capable of meeting together in one place; the univerſal Church therefore lies under a neceſſity of ſubdividing itſelf into particular Churches; and thoſe again into particular Congregations, according as they find to be moſt convenient for the purſuing that ſame end, for which they are ſo incorporated. Moreover, ſince all theſe particular Churches and Congregations are ſtill, or ought to be, but parts and members of that one catholic Church, which our Saviour Chriſt has appointed and founded; it follows, that none of them ought to conſtitute or act any thing amongſt themſelves, which may give a juſt occaſion for the breaking of that union and concord, which

which he deſigned, and has commanded always to be maintained amongſt them. But, on the contrary, matters ought every where ſo to be ordered, as that if a member of any one particular Church ſhould travel into any other part of the world, he may meet with nothing in any Chriſtian congregation, where he comes, which juſtly ſhould be a hindrance to him from aſſembling or communicating with it.

LVI. *The particular acts to be performed in theſe Chriſtian aſſemblies, are all ſuch as tend to the edification of the people* in virtue and godlineſs, (which is the deſign of their incorporation) and conſequently to the promoting of each man's eternal ſalvation, (which is the end that every Chriſtian is ſuppoſed to purſue.) All which are reducible to theſe two heads, viz. devotion towards God, which includes confeſſion of ſins, prayer for all things neceſſary, both for themſelves and others, and praiſing of God, as well for his own excellency and perfection, as for his love and beneficence to all mankind: and

2. the

2. the inſtruction of the people which are aſſembled; which is to be done by reading and explaining the holy Scriptures, catechizing, preaching, &c. But there is one act of devotion towards God to be performed in ſuch public aſſemblies, which is commonly known by the name of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, or the Holy Communion: of which it will be fit to ſay ſomething more particularly, becauſe it is an ordinance altogether of poſitive inſtitution, as well as baptiſm, of which I have already ſpoken.

LVII. As our Saviour's death and paſſion, which he underwent for the ſins of the whole world, ſhould ever, out of gratitude, be remembered by us in the moſt emphatical and affecting manner; ſo, except we have, every one of us, a ſhare and intereſt in that atonement, which he thereby made to God for us, we cannot, by the terms of the Goſpel, hope for eternal ſalvation. In order then to both theſe ends, *he himſelf*, before his death, *appointed it, as a perpetual ordinance*, for ever

ever to be continued in his Church, *that bread ſhould be bleſſed, broken, and eaten; and a cup alſo bleſſed, diſtributed, and drank, in ſuch aſſemblies as ſhould meet together in his name*, not only as a remembrance of his ſufferings for us, which are thereby ſhewn forth and repreſented; but alſo as the communion, that is to ſay, the exhibition of his body and blood unto, and the participation of them by, all faithful and good Chriſtians. To ſay with the Roman Church, that the ſubſtance of bread and wine, being bleſſed or conſecrated in this ordinance, are tranſubſtantiated, or turned into the very real ſubſtance of the body and blood of Chriſt, ſo as that that very ſame body of his, which was crucified, and that blood, which was ſhed, are wholly and entirely received into the bodily mouth, and ſwallowed down by every communicant, does not only draw after it ſuch monſtrous abſurdities, as no man, I think, without renouncing his reaſon, can digeſt, nor can be inferred from any paſſage of Scripture, interpreted according to the rules which I have

have laid down, Part I. §. 25. and 33. but is alſo directly contrary even to the letter, as well as meaning of the New Teſtament; in which the bread, in this holy inſtitution, is plainly called bread, (and, by the ſame rule, the wine muſt ſtill remain wine, as to its natural ſubſtance,) even after the bleſſing or conſecration of it. As therefore I muſt needs conclude, that the body and blood of Chriſt are not received by the members of his Church, after that manner, which they of Rome do define; ſo muſt it alſo follow, that their worſhipping of the hoſt and pretended ſacrifice of Chriſt in the maſs, together with their depriving the laity of the cup, (which, beſides other abſurdities, do wholly depend upon the doctrine of tranſubſtantiation,) are none other than mere human and unlawful inventions and practices. But ſince a man may then be ſaid truly to receive and partake of any thing, though at never ſo great a diſtance from him, when he has a real intereſt in it, and enjoys the benefit and advantage of it, (as a man may have an eſtate, and reap the pro-

profits of it, though it lies in a far diſtant country,) I do therefore conclude, that the way, whereby we do receive, or communicate in, the body and blood of Chriſt, by this ordinance, is by being made partakers of thoſe benefits, which, by the crucifying of his body, and the ſhedding of his blood, do accrue to us; and that whoſoever eats of this bread, and drinks of this cup, in ſuch a manner as Chriſt has appointed, has thereby aſſuredly a ſhare of thoſe benefits held forth and conveyed unto him.

LVIII. How often *this ordinance is to be practiſed and repeated* in every congregation, is not expreſsly determined, either by Chriſt or his Apoſtles; and therefore can only be regulated by the prudence of the Church itſelf: but common reaſon will tell us, that it ſhould be *ſo often at leaſt, as may be ſufficient to preſerve a freſh and lively remembrance of the ſufferings of our Saviour in the minds of the people*; this being one main end of its firſt inſtitution. And ſo often, therefore, ought every

Chriſtian, who is arrived to years of underſtanding, (for ſuch only are capable of doing any thing in remembrance of another) to come and be partakers of it. For to contemn or neglect this ordinance, which Chriſt has appointed for ſuch a peculiar end, argues a great ſlight and diſregard of his death and paſſion, (beſides the diſobedience to his command) and therefore is juſtly to be looked on as a very great and heinous ſin.

LIX. As it is a great affront, and even a mocking of God, for a man to draw near to him in any of his ordinances, without a ſincere and well-meaning heart (for which reaſon hypocriſy in Scripture is repreſented as moſt odious, and the prayer and ſacrifice of a wicked man, whilſt he continues ſuch, is ſaid to be an abomination unto God,) ſo does he ſeem to reſent ſuch a practice in no inſtance more than in this of the Holy Communion; of which he, who eats and drinks unworthily, is expreſsly ſaid by the Apoſtle to be guilty of the body and blood of Chriſt,

Chriſt, and to eat and drink damnation to himſelf: which expreſſions, although they are differently interpreted by divers perſons, yet, in whatever ſenſe we take them, they do abundantly ſhew, that God is in a particular manner offended with thoſe, who any way profane this ſacred inſtitution. *It* therefore *is the duty*, and ought very much to be the concern *of every Chriſtian*, *firſt to examine himſelf*, and to make the beſt trial and enquiry that he can, whether he be truly ſincere in his reſolutions of ſerving and obeying God faithfully all his life long, (for any perſon who is thus diſpoſed, and none other, is ever acceptable to God,) *and then*, with devotion and reverence ſuitable unto ſuch ſincerity, *to* come and *eat of this bread, and drink of this cup*; that as, on the one ſide, he may not neglect what Chriſt has commanded and required; ſo, on the other, he may not incur the penalty, which is threatened to an unworthy receiver.

LX. He that worſhips or prays to God by himſelf alone, may do it as well by

offering up only the inward thoughts and desires of his mind, which are clearly seen and known unto God, as by expressing himself outwardly by words; which, though even in our private devotions they may be very proper to keep our minds intent upon what we are about, yet are no way necessary to inform God of what we think or wish for. But when a society of men do meet to join together in God's worship, their devotion must of necessity be outwardly expressed in words; because there is no other way of keeping their thoughts (wherein their worship does consist) united and joined together. And since words not understood are in effect the same with no words at all; I conclude, that *the language, wherein the worship of any Church* or congregation *is offered up to God, must always be such as is well understood by the assembly of the people who meet together*. Nor does even the doctrine of transubstantiation amaze me more, than that the Church of Rome should own the 14th chapter of St. Paul's first Epistle to the Corinthians to be the word

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of God, and yet have all their public ſervices every where performed in the Latin tongue only, which is not now underſtood by the generality of any nation in the world.

LXI. As *peace and unity, mutual love and good agreement* amongſt the members of every ſociety, *together with order and decency* in all that is tranſacted amongſt them, are abſolutely neceſſary to the being and continuance, or at leaſt to the well-being of the ſociety itſelf; ſo *are* they carefully preſcribed and inculcated by Chriſt and his Apoſtles, as things *to be always preſerved and maintained in the Chriſtian Church*. And as he, who firſt occaſions the violation of any of them, is plainly guilty of a very great ſin; ſo in all matters that are not particularly and clearly determined by God's law, we cannot propoſe a better and ſafer rule to ourſelves, than always to do that which tends moſt to the advancement and preſervation of them.

LXII. If ſome certain time be not determined for Chriſtians to meet together for God's worſhip, which every man may know of before it comes, and accordingly prepare himſelf for it by laying aſide, for that time, his worldly buſineſs; diſorder and confuſion (which is the natural conſequence of uncertainty) muſt needs follow. That one day, at leaſt, in ſeven was expreſsly required by God, under the Moſaic law, to be ſanctified and ſet apart for his ſervice, is beyond diſpute. That the obſervation of the Jewiſh ſabbath, or the laſt day of the week, is not required from the Chriſtian Church, to me ſeems very evident, from St. Paul's reckoning it amongſt the tranſitory *ſhadows* of the old Law, Col. ii. 17. But that we Chriſtians ought not to be behind-hand with the Jews, in ſetting apart a proportion of our time for God's ſervice, I think will follow, as well from the great mercies, which we have received from him, (for which we, no leſs than they, ought to ſhew and expreſs our thankfulneſs,) as alſo from that general rule, which our Saviour

viour has given us, that our righteouſneſs ſhould even exceed the righteouſneſs of the Scribes and Phariſees. And that accordingly one day in ſeven, namely, the firſt day of the week, (which in Scripture is therefore called the Lord's day, Rev. i. 10.) has ever been ſo ſet apart for the ſervice of God in all Chriſtian Churches, I preſume will be denied by none; as alſo, that the reaſon of the Apoſtles making choice of this particular day, was in remembrance of our Saviour's glorious reſurrection, which on that day was performed, and whereby their faith in him, which began to waver, was confirmed and raiſed above all doubt or diffidence. Now ſince no reaſon can be given, or ſo much as imagined, why this day ſhould be changed for any other day of the week; I do, from what has been ſaid, conclude, that *the Lord's day*, or firſt day of the week, *ought for ever to be kept holy in the Chriſtian Church, and particularly dedicated to the ſervice of God.* And where either the Church univerſal, or any particular Church, has ſet aſide any other days

to be kept holy, in remembrance either of any of God's mercies to us; or of the martyrdom of any of his choſen ſaints, who ſealed the truth of the Goſpel with their lives, and tranſmitted it ſo confirmed down to us; or as days of faſting or abſtinence, in order to humble ourſelves before God for our ſins; ſince in all this there is nothing contrary to God's law, nor any thing but what may be well conſiſtent with and ſerviceable to true piety; it will follow from what I have ſaid, §. 61. that every member of ſuch a Church is obliged to keep and obſerve theſe ſame other holy days, ſo far as no way to give ſcandal, diſturb the order, or break the peace of the Church, which has eſtabliſhed them.

LXIII. Order and decency neceſſarily require that *all the outward circumſtances of worſhip*, which God himſelf has not determined by his own law, *ſhould be* ſo *ſettled by the Church*, as that all confuſion and unſeemlineſs therein may, as much as is poſſible, be avoided. But care on the other

other ſide ought ever to be taken, that modes and ceremonies be not ſo multiplied as to become uneaſy and burdenſome, or diſtract the devotion of the people. Now, there being no ſuch fixed and demonſtrable rules of decency and order, but what will have a different reliſh with different men, according to their ſeveral educations, and cuſtoms to which they may have been uſed, it will be very difficult, if not impoſſible, for any Church ſo to regulate theſe external matters, as to pleaſe every man's fancy, and give diſguſt to none: for what ſome may think to be but decent, others may take to be too formal or pompous; and what theſe may apprehend to be ſuitable to the ſimplicity of Chriſtianity, another ſort may look on as mean and jejune. As therefore the Church in this caſe can do no more, but act according to the beſt of her prudence; ſo, ſince every man cannot expect to have his particular fancy in theſe things pleaſed and gratified, *it will* evidently *appear to be the duty of each private Chriſtian, ſo far to comply with every ſuch conſtitution of the Church*

Church where he dwells, (provided there be nothing in it which is ſinful) *as not to break the peace and unity, or diſturb the order of the Church, on that account.* But if any Church ſhall offer to impoſe any ceremonies or practices whatſoever, (which God has not preſcribed, and which therefore are in themſelves indifferent,) not for decency and order, but as things in themſelves holy, or abſolutely neceſſary to ſalvation, (as ſome of old would have done by the Jewiſh ceremonies) with ſuch impoſitions as theſe no Chriſtian ought at all to comply, nor ſuffer his religion or conſcience to be thus burdened: but *every man muſt ſtand faſt in that liberty wherewith Chriſt has made us free*; though at the ſame time he muſt be very careful not to pretend, or uſe this liberty as a cloak of maliciouſneſs.

LXIV. Since different opinions in matters of Religion are generally apt to beget diſſenſions and animoſities between thoſe who entertain them, as our daily experience does abundantly teſtify; it ought to

to be the Church's, and every private Chriſtian's endeavour, that all men may become of one and the ſame judgment, or at leaſt, that there may be as few differences amongſt them as is poſſible. *When* therefore *any religious diſpute ariſes*, whereby the Church's peace and unity is like to be endangered, *it is free and proper for* (nor is there any thing which ſhould hinder) *either the Church univerſal, or any particular Church*, or even any prudent men whatſoever, *to declare and publiſh their ſenſe of the matter* in debate. But as no man can be obliged to believe the determination of any Church or party whatſoever, any farther than he is convinced and ſatisfied of its agreement with reaſon and the holy Scriptures, (Part II. §. 1. and 2.) ſo is not any man bound to oppoſe or diſpute even againſt an error itſelf; except there be ſomething in it, which is injurious to Chriſtian faith or practice, and conſequently which may prove pernicious to men's ſalvation. And therefore if ſuch a miſtake, which may have prevailed in any Church, cannot well

well be rectified without endangering the breach of peace and charity, (becauſe they who hold it, it may be, are obſtinately wedded to it,) I think *it is the duty of us all* to be very tender in ſuch a caſe, and to permit every man freely to abound in his own ſenſe, until ſuch time as God ſhall think fit to bring them to a clearer ſight of the truth: and *by no means to renounce the communion of any Church, on the account of any error that is not damnable*; and much leſs on account only of ſuch terms or expreſſions as are but abſtruſe, or of doubtful ſignification. For otherwiſe ſince the apprehenſions of men are ſo very different, (eſpecially in ſuch things as, being remote from our ſenſes, are matter only of rational ſpeculation,) if difference of opinion upon ſuch theological queſtions, as do not immediately concern our ſalvation, were a ſufficient ground for ſeparation in point of communion, there would ſoon be probably almoſt as many Churches as men in the world. But if any Church ſhould require from a man, either to comply with, or practiſe, any thing

thing which is not only againſt his fancy in point of decency or convenience, but alſo againſt his conſcience in point of lawfulneſs; or that he ſhould not only be ſilent and not oppoſe, but alſo explicitly profeſs the belief of any ſuch doctrines as he judges to be falſe, (however innocent the belief of them may be to them who think them true;) and if ſuch a Church ſhall refuſe and deny her communion to all thoſe who will not join with her upon theſe terms; we muſt rather be contented to be excluded from ſuch a Church's communion, than to purchaſe it by ſolemnly telling a downright lie before God and the world, or by the violation of any other of God's commands: for if we offer to do evil, that good may come of it, St. Paul has declared us to be in a ſtate of damnation.

LXV. For the due regulation of every ſociety, it is neceſſary that it have a power ſomewhere or other veſted in it, over its own members, either to compel them to live orderly, according to its laws and con-

conſtitutions, or, if any of them are diſobedient and refractory, and will not, upon due admonition, be reclaimed, wholly to exclude them from the body of the community. For otherwiſe, if the members of any ſociety may, at their pleaſure, break its conſtitutions, and violate its laws without controul, this would be wholly to pull down the incloſure, and lay all open and common, as before; and conſequently, in effect, to diſſolve the ſociety itſelf. And accordingly *our Saviour has given the Church a power to admoniſh and rebuke thoſe, who give any ſcandal by their ungodly and unruly behaviour*; *and if*, upon this, *they do not repent and reform, of rejecting and cutting them off from her communion*. Which authority muſt ever be exerciſed with due mildneſs and caution, for the edification, and not with heat and fury, which in the end would more probably tend to the deſtruction of the Church. But if any Church ſhall go beyond this, to puniſh or perſecute men with fire and ſword, or with fines and impriſonment, only for being of a different perſuaſion from,

from, and refuſing to communicate with her; in my opinion ſhe herein acts contrary to that mildneſs and gentleneſs, which the Goſpel, upon all occaſions, preſcribes; and particularly in the caſe of dealing with thoſe who oppoſe themſelves to it, 2 Tim. ii. 24. Although at the ſame time it cannot be denied, but that if any man, under the pretence of conſcience or religion, ſhall advance ſuch doctrines, or do ſuch acts, as are deſtructive to the peace or ſafety of the civil ſtate or commonwealth; the civil magiſtrate may, and ought, to puniſh ſuch a perſon according to the laws of the land, notwithſtanding all his pretences. For if the plea of conſcience (the truth of which can only be known to Almighty God) be ſufficient to ſave any malefactor from puniſhment, no civil ſociety can ever be ſafe, and all human laws and magiſtrates would be wholly uſeleſs. See Part I. §. 35.

LXVI. And as Almighty God, in his mercy, is pleaſed not to cut the greateſt ſinners off from all hopes of pardon; but

but is ready, at any time, upon their true and ſincere repentance, to receive them again into his favour; ſo has he committed unto *the Church* the miniſtry of reconciliation: which Church therefore accordingly *ought not only to endeavour to bring ſinners to repentance by preaching, admonition, and exhortation; but alſo wherever ſhe ſees evident marks and tokens of it in any perſon*, (of which yet there ought to be good aſſurance) for his greater comfort and eaſe of conſcience, *to remit*, or abſolve him from *his ſins, and reſtore him again to* the benefit and privilege of *Chriſtian communion*, of which I ſuppoſe that he has, or ought to have, been deprived: and whatever ſentence of thus binding or looſing, remitting or retaining of men's ſins, is duly and regularly pronounced by the Church upon earth, our Saviour aſſures us, it ſhall be ratified and confirmed by God in heaven. But that a man is obliged to make a particular confeſſion of all his ſins unto any other perſon, except God, in order to obtain the pardon of or abſolution from them; as I no where find

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it aſſerted in the holy Scripture; ſo the reaſon, which the Roman divines do allege for it, is very weak and unconcluding: for it is not the particular confeſſion of a man's ſins, (which may be performed by the moſt hardened impenitent) but his contrition, and the viſible reformation of his life, (which may ſufficiently appear without a particular confeſſion) that only can enable the Church, or her miniſters, to judge whether he truly repents of his ſins or not, and, conſequently, whether he be a proper object of God's mercy, and the Church's favour. Although I deny not, but that, in ſome caſes, it may be very proper for a man to make known the diſeaſes of his ſoul to a prudent ſpiritual phyſician, that he may have his advice for the cure of them; and his duty alſo to make an open confeſſion of his ſins, whenever it is neceſſary for God's glory, or to repair any public ſcandal, which has been given by him.

LXVII. That Almighty God, even where he has pardoned a man's ſins upon

his true repentance, may yet, on the ſcore of thoſe very ſins which he has ſo pardoned, lay ſome ſharp and ſevere temporal afflictions upon the penitent, either to keep him more effectually from ſinning for the time to come, or that it may be a terror to others, or for many other reaſons beſt known to himſelf, is a thing that cannot be diſputed. But from hence to infer, that theſe temporal afflictions, if not laid on us in this world, are to be undergone in purgatory, and that therefore, for the preventing them, it is fit and neceſſary *that penance ſhould be impoſed by way of ſatisfaction, or indulgences granted by way of remiſſion*; and all this without any warrant from the holy Scripture, ſave only a faint and forced conſequence from ſome few perverted texts; *is a thing ſo groundleſs and precarious*, that it amazes me to think how men can ſuffer themſelves to be ſo groſsly impoſed upon. And whoſoever ſhall duly conſider upon what weak grounds the Pope and his Prelates do pretend to a power of diſpenſing and diſtributing the merits of Chriſt unto the

the people, by way of indulgence, (as if they alone had the keeping of that treaſure under lock and key; and to which, though infinite, they have yet added the merits of the ſaints, to make their treaſure more abundant;) will, I think, very much wonder that their people ſhould be ſo free to part with their earthly treaſure, in purchaſing theſe indulgences upon no better ſecurity.

LXVIII. That the Apoſtles of Chriſt, when they were firſt ſent abroad to preach the glad tidings of the Goſpel, did anoint many ſick perſons with oil, and thereby miraculouſly heal them, we are plainly told by St. Mark, ch. vi. ver. 13; and that in this they did no more than what Chriſt himſelf had expreſsly commanded them, is moſt reaſonable and probable to ſuppoſe. Moreover, that the anointing with oil, which is mentioned by St. James, ch. v. ver. 14. was intended for the very ſame purpoſe, viz. the raiſing up the ſick perſon, and reſtoring him to health, is as apparent as any thing can be, from

the very context. But as *we do not find that* this *anointing of the ſick was appointed* either by Chriſt or his Apoſtles, *as a ſtanding and perpetual ordinance for ever to be uſed in the Church*; ſo ſince experience ſhews, that the miraculous effect of healing thereby is now wholly ceaſed, I can ſee no reaſon why the practice itſelf ſhould be any longer continued. But what juſt ground the Church of Rome can have from either of theſe, or any other place of Scripture, for the divine inſtitution of their extreme unction, which they make uſe of for a far different end, namely, the preparing thereby of perſons, who are paſt hopes of recovery, for their paſſage into the next life, is more than I am able to find out.

LXIX. As the body natural would be but a confuſed and uſeleſs lump, if it were not diſtinguiſhed into the ſeveral members, which are neceſſary for its own ſervice and preſervation: and as the body politic would be but a diſorderly rabble, if there were not magiſtrates ſettled to rule

rule and govern, and miniſterial officers appointed to perform all neceſſary functions in and about it; ſo the holy Scripture as well as reaſon aſſures us, (and the practice of the apoſtolical Church, which is there recorded, confirms it,) that the like appointment and diſtinction of offices are no leſs neceſſary in the Church, in order to the regular and orderly government of it, and the due execution of all its laws and conſtitutions. But how far theſe offices are limited and appointed by the law of God, or how far left to be ſettled and determined by the prudence of the Church, according as circumſtances may render it convenient, is what I ſhall not take upon me to pronounce my ſentence in. But *whatever polity or eccleſiaſtical conſtitution is ſettled and acquieſced in, either by the whole Church in general, or by that of any nation or country in particular, I think, ought quietly to be ſubmitted to by every one who would be a member of ſuch reſpective Church*, except there appears to him to be either ſomething therein, which is not only uncommanded, but even con-

the very context. But as *we do not find that* this *anointing of the ſick was appointed* either by Chriſt or his Apoſtles, *as a ſtanding and perpetual ordinance for ever to be uſed in the Church*; ſo ſince experience ſhews, that the miraculous effect of healing thereby is now wholly ceaſed, I can ſee no reaſon why the practice itſelf ſhould be any longer continued. But what juſt ground the Church of Rome can have from either of theſe, or any other place of Scripture, for the divine inſtitution of their extreme unction, which they make uſe of for a far different end, namely, the preparing thereby of perſons, who are paſt hopes of recovery, for their paſſage into the next life, is more than I am able to find out.

LXIX. As the body natural would be but a confuſed and uſeleſs lump, if it were not diſtinguiſhed into the ſeveral members, which are neceſſary for its own ſervice and preſervation: and as the body politic would be but a diſorderly rabble, if there were not magiſtrates ſettled to rule

rule and govern, and miniſterial officers appointed to perform all neceſſary functions in and about it; ſo the holy Scripture as well as reaſon aſſures us, (and the practice of the apoſtolical Church, which is there recorded, confirms it,) that the like appointment and diſtinction of offices are no leſs neceſſary in the Church, in order to the regular and orderly government of it, and the due execution of all its laws and conſtitutions. But how far theſe offices are limited and appointed by the law of God, or how far left to be ſettled and determined by the prudence of the Church, according as circumſtances may render it convenient, is what I ſhall not take upon me to pronounce my ſentence in. But *whatever polity or eccleſiaſtical conſtitution is ſettled and acquieſced in, either by the whole Church in general, or by that of any nation or country in particular, I think, ought quietly to be ſubmitted to by every one who would be a member of ſuch reſpective Church*, except there appears to him to be either ſomething therein, which is not only uncommanded, but even con-

trary to the law of God; or elſe ſomething wanting, which God requires, and therefore is abſolutely neceſſary to be maintained and kept up in all Churches. Nor can I apprehend that any leſs warrant can be ſufficient for breaking or endangering the peace or unity of the Church, (the preſervation of which is ſo often and ſo earneſtly recommended to us in the holy Scripture) beſides the abſolute neceſſity of obeying the poſitive command of God himſelf. And therefore, ſince the government of the Church by Biſhops, that is to ſay, by certain perſons, having in their ſeveral diſtricts a priority among, and in ſome reſpects a ſuperiority over, the preſbyters, has for ſo many ages been univerſally ſettled amongſt and acquieſced in by all Chriſtians in all parts of the world, I cannot find how they can be excuſed, who, without any neceſſity for ſo doing, have ſo earneſtly ſet themſelves, not only to retrench the exceſſes and rectify the abuſes of the epiſcopal power, but alſo to pull down and wholly aboliſh the very order itſelf; to the no ſmall ſcandal

dal of thoſe who think that ſo univerſal a conſtitution, every where taking place, even in the primitive Church, could be grounded on no leſs than an apoſtolic ordinance, (of which there ſeem to be ſome, not obſcure, footſteps in the Scriptures of the New Teſtament,) and that moſt probably in conformity to that imparity, which Chriſt himſelf eſtabliſhed between the Apoſtles and the ſeventy Diſciples, who were yet both commiſſioned by him to preach the Goſpel.

LXX. How far a caſe of neceſſity may, upon ſome occaſions, excuſe or juſtify a man for taking on him an office, which regularly does not belong to him, eſpecially if his deſign therein be truly honeſt and ſincere, I know not. But, *in a ſettled Church, where no ſuch neceſſity can fairly and juſtly be pleaded, no man* certainly *ought to intrude into any eccleſiaſtical function, or exerciſe any ſuch office, who is not called and admitted thereunto by the lawful authority, and according to the eſtabliſhed conſtitutions of the ſociety.* For if this be

not carefully obſerved, the diſtinction of offices and functions in the Church is in effect wholly taken away, and a wide door opened for confuſion and anarchy. But then, on the other ſide, good care ought ever to be taken by the Church, that no perſons be entruſted with any ſacred office, but ſuch as are duly qualified for it; and that ſuch a maintenance be provided and ſettled for every ſuch perſon, as that he may not be neceſſitated to neglect the public ſervice of God, and the due exerciſe of his function, by being conſtrained to beſtow and ſpend overmuch of his time and labour in getting a living for himſelf and his family.

LXXI. I have now gone through what I at firſt deſigned; and have not, that I know of, omitted any one thing, which I could judge to be a material or neceſſary part of Religion; although I have on purpoſe endeavoured to avoid the uſe of ſome words, which do frequently occur in all or moſt ſyſtems of divinity that I have met with; and the reaſon why I have ſo done

done is, not that I find fault with the words themſelves, but becauſe I would have my reader take notice that *Religion does not conſiſt in terms of art, or forms of expreſſion*; but in the belief and practice of ſuch things as God has made known, and requires from us; and it is too common among men to wrangle about words, before they have clearly fixed and agreed upon the meaning of them. I have not, for example, made uſe of this term *juſtification*: but yet I have endeavoured to ſhew, upon what conditions a ſinner obtains the pardon of his ſins and mercy at the hand of God; which is the ſame thing. Nor have I ſaid any thing of the nature or number of *ſacraments*: but I have ſpoken what I thought might be neceſſary concerning baptiſm, the holy communion, and thoſe other things, which the Church of Rome calls by that name. And if once I am ſatisfied touching any thing, how far God requires it from us, and whether or no it be neceſſary to ſalvation, I cannot ſee why I ſhould trouble myſelf much in enquiring, whether ſuch a thing

a thing may properly be called a ſacrament or not, which to me ſeems no more but a diſpute about the meaning of a word. True indeed it is, that in the doctrine of the Trinity, which I have delivered Part II. §. 22. I have expreſsly made uſe of the terms *perſon*, *ſubſtance*, &c. becauſe I could find none others ſo fit and proper to expreſs my thoughts; nor durſt I venture in ſo ſublime a matter to apply new words to thoſe things, of which I can have but very imperfect and obſcure conceptions. And having thus ſaid all that I intend upon this occaſion, I freely ſubmit the whole to the judgment and cenſure of every reader; leaving him to that liberty which I myſelf always deſire to enjoy; and being ready to retract any thing that I have ſaid, whenſoever I am convinced that I have been therein miſtaken.

AN

APPENDIX

TO A

GENTLEMAN'S RELIGION:

IN WHICH IT IS PROVED

THAT NOTHING CONTRARY TO OUR REASON CAN POSSIBLY BE THE OBJECT OF OUR BELIEF; BUT THAT IT IS NO JUST EXCEPTION AGAINST SOME OF THE DOCTRINES OF CHRISTIANITY, THAT THEY ARE ABOVE OUR REASON.

AN

APPENDIX

TO A

GENTLEMAN'S RELIGION.

I. HOW thoſe perſons, who take unto themſelves the diſtinguiſhing name of *Unitarians*, do diſſent from the main body of *Chriſtians*, of whatſoever church or perſuaſion, touching the doctrines of the Trinity, and the incarnation of our Saviour Chriſt, is ſo well known, that I need not here offer to open or explain the terms of the controverſy, which is managed between them. Now when in this diſpute the Unitarians are preſt with ſome paſſages of Scripture, which ſeem very evidently to make againſt them, beſides other

other ways, which they have to avoid the force of them, they commonly have recourſe to the nature of the thing controverted; and preſs their adverſaries back again with this demand, How ſuch a thing can poſſibly be? And when to this it is replied, that there is evidently no contradiction to ſound reaſon in the doctrines themſelves, and that the truth of them ought to be believed upon the authority of God, who hath revealed them; but that the manner of them is utterly above, and altogether incomprehenſible to, our finite and narrow underſtandings, and therefore not to be enquired after; in return to this, there are ſome who maintain, that if theſe doctrines were not contrary to reaſon, yet this alone is a ſufficient cauſe to reject them, that they are confeſſedly above it. For of that which is above our reaſon, ſay they, we can form no true conception, or idea; and it is abſurd, or rather impoſſible, for a man to believe that which he cannot clearly and plainly ſo much as conceive or apprehend.

II. For

II. For the right ſtating and clearing of this whole controverſy, I have given ſuch hints in the Gentleman's Religion, Part I. §. 33. and Part II. §. 2. 22, 33, 37. as I thought to be moſt fit for men of ordinary capacity, and moſt ſuitable to that brevity, which I all along deſigned. But in this Appendix I ſhall addreſs myſelf unto thoſe who are of a more refined underſtanding, and accuſtomed to a more exact way of thinking; and try if I can give them any ſatisfaction in a matter, which ſeems to be not a little perplexed, perhaps by the overmuch curioſity of ſome of both the contending parties.

III. That our knowledge of things is but ſhort and imperfect, is confeſſed on all ſides. It is alſo very evident, that no language whatſoever will afford us variety of words ſufficient to expreſs all the diverſities and peculiarities of our thoughts, ſo as to ſecure them from the miſtakes of ignorance or miſapprehenſion, and the cavils of perverſeneſs; but that, after all our

our care, our moſt cautious expreſſions will ſometimes be liable to be miſinterpreted to a contrary, or at leaſt wreſted to a different, meaning from what we intended. And therefore the moſt acute and judicious writer will probably find himſelf much miſtaken, if he at any time hopes ſo to handle any controverſy as to ſatisfy every man. But ſince, upon the ſtricteſt examination which I have been able to make, I am myſelf fully convinced of the truth of what I have concluded in this diſpute, I will now, with God's aſſiſtance, try whether I can expreſs my thoughts with ſo much clearneſs, and prove them with ſuch ſufficient arguments, and pertinent inſtances, as may give ſome ſatisfaction to others alſo: and that I may the more effectually do this, I ſhall endeavour to proceed as near as I can in ſuch a method as is always uſed in mathematical demonſtrations.

IV. This word *doctrine* is but another term for a *propoſition*; and what a *propoſition*

ſition is, or when it is ſaid to be true or falſe, certain, probable, or doubtful, I need not ſpend time to explain.

V. *Reaſon* is that faculty in man, (for I meddle not with the knowledge of angels) whereby he apprehends things, and their attributes or properties, and frames a judgment concerning what he apprehends; and alſo from thoſe judgments, which he makes, draws ſometimes more immediate, or more remote and diſtant conſequences.

VI. The truth of ſome propoſitions is ſo very plain, that as no man in his ſenſes can deny them, ſo is it impoſſible to find out any thing which is more plain, whereby to prove them. And ſuch propoſitions as theſe I call *ſelf-evident*: ſuch, for example, are, that *all the parts of a thing taken together are equal to the whole*; that *both parts of a contradiction cannot be true at the ſame time*; and the like.

VII. When the truth of a propoſition

does not immediately appear by its own light, but yet the propoſition can, beyond queſtion, be proved from other propoſitions which are ſelf-evident; ſuch a propoſition as this I term to be *built upon reaſon alone*. Such, for inſtance, are, that *two triangles, having equal baſes, and being contained between the ſame parallel lines, are equal*; and all other propoſitions, which are capable of being demonſtrated, or clearly proved, from the bare principles of reaſon.

VIII. Where the poſſibility of a propoſition (i. e. that it implies no contradiction) can be evidently proved from the principles of reaſon alone, but yet the actual truth and reality of it cannot the ſame way be made appear, ſuch a propoſition as this I call *reconcileable to reaſon*. Thus for example, that *an oak ſhould grow up to its full and uſual ſtature in an hour*, is as poſſible, (that is to ſay, as free from contradiction,) as that it ſhould do the ſame in an hundred years; (for all growth is motion, and the ſwiftneſs of motion may

may be for ever increaſed;) but that ever this was actually ſo, cannot be proved by any arguments drawn from reaſon.

IX. Where any propoſition (either immediately in itſelf, or mediately in its conſequences,) does plainly contradict any other propoſition, which is either ſelf-evident, or built upon reaſon, ſuch a propoſition as this I term to be *contrary to reaſon*: ſuch, for example, is this propoſition, that *the three angles of a triangle are equal to three right angles*, and ſuch like.

X. Where a propoſition is in itſelf true, but we are unable clearly to apprehend or frame a notion or conception of the things contained under the terms of it, ſuch a propoſition I term to be *above reaſon*. And a propoſition may be either wholly and altogether above our reaſon, when we can frame no manner of conception of the things ſpoken of, or elſe but partly above it, when ſome notions of the things we have, but thoſe very obſcure and imperfect. Thus the doctrine of light and co-

lours is wholly above the reaſon of a man born blind, who can frame no manner of notion of theſe things, from the deſcription which others make of them, becauſe he is altogether deſtitute of proper organs to receive any impreſſion from the things themſelves. But the ſame doctrine would not be ſo much above the reaſon of a man, who had ſome faint and confuſed glimmering of ſight; though ſtill much more above his reaſon than it would be, if he were endowed with the faculty of clear and diſtinct ſight, as other men commonly are.

XI. To *know*, is to give aſſent to a propoſition, when it evidently appears to be built upon reaſon. But when the truth of a propoſition is aſſented to, not upon arguments drawn from the reaſon or the nature of the thing, but upon account of the veracity and authority of the perſon or perſons who affirm it; ſuch a propoſition as that is ſaid to be *believed*. Furthermore, if a man underſtands not the meaning of a propoſition, and yet believes that

it

it contains a truth in it, becauſe of the deference he pays to the perſon who ſpeaks it, this I call an *implicit belief:* and, properly ſpeaking, the object of ſuch a belief is not the truth of the propoſition itſelf, but only the veracity of the ſpeaker. But where a man underſtands the meaning of the propoſition, which he believes, this I call an *explicit belief.*

XII. *No man can poſſibly believe or give his aſſent to any doctrine or propoſition, which appears to him to be contrary to reaſon:* (ſee §. 9.) For to own a propoſition to be ſelf-evident, or built upon reaſon, and yet at the ſame time to believe another, which mediately or immediately is contradictory to it, is abſolutely impoſſible.

XIII. *If a propoſition be reconcileable to reaſon,* (§. 8.) *and the truth of it alſo teſtified by ſuch perſons, whoſe veracity is beyond all doubt or exception, ſuch a propoſition cannot but be believed by any one, unto whom it comes ſo teſtified.* For if it be re-

conceileable to reaſon, then it may poſſibly be true; (§. 8.) and if I am actually convinced of the veracity of the perſon or perſons who relate it, I cannot chooſe but believe that it is true. From whence I think it evidently follows, that revelation, or the teſtimony of another, may juſtly be looked upon, not only as *a means of information*, but alſo as *a motive of perſuaſion*, whatever a late author ſays to the contrary.

XIV. But that which is moſt material in this preſent controverſy, is what I am now going to make appear, viz. that *a man may have moſt ſufficient and cogent arguments, to give his aſſent to ſuch propoſitions as are not only in part, but wholly and altogether above his reaſon.* (§. 10.) For the clear and plain evincing of which, I ſhall crave leave to make a relation of a conference, which once I had with a blind man; to whom, when I underſtood that he had been quite blind from his infancy, and never could remember to have ſeen the leaſt glimmering of light, I had the curioſity

curioſity to put ſeveral queſtions. I aſked him firſt of all, whether ever he had endeavoured to frame any notion or conception of light or colours, of which I ſuppoſe he had often heard mention to be made in common diſcourſe. To which he anſwered me, that he had often endeavoured it, with the greateſt application of his mind that poſſibly he could. And to that end and purpoſe he had made it his buſineſs to aſk all the queſtions he could think of, whereby to get information, but all to no purpoſe; for that he was ſtill altogether as ignorant of the nature of light and colours, and as unable to frame any conception of them, as if he had never before heard the names of them. He told me moreover, that he was a long time before he would or could believe, that other men had any faculty at all, which he wanted. For, ſays he, I was ſenſible of no defect or imperfection in myſelf, but believed myſelf to be altogether as perfect as all other men with whom I converſed; and therefore, when they told me that I was blind, and talked

to me of light and colours, I apprehended for a great while, that they did it only to impoſe upon me. But are you now convinced, ſaid I, that you are blind, and that other men have the faculty of ſight, which you want? Yes, replied he, I am fully ſatisfied and convinced of it. How can that be, ſaid I, when you can frame no manner of notion of light or colours, which are the objects of ſight? Thus, anſwered he, I was convinced of it: they would put me at a diſtance from them, and yet would tell me every thing that I did; as whether I ſtood, or ſate, or held up my hand, or let it down, or the like: whereas I could not diſcover any thing which they did, except I were cloſe to them, and felt them carefully with my hands. Now by this, continued he, I am fully convinced, that other men have a faculty which I want, whereby they can diſcover and diſtinguiſh things at a diſtance, which they call *ſight*: and I am told by all men, that there is ſomething called *light*, which is diffuſed through the air, and is the inſtrument whereby they

are

are enabled to exercise this faculty; and also that the *colour* and *shape* of things are the objects, upon which the same is employed. But although I can by my touch distinguish between the different shapes of some things, and so can frame a notion of *shape*; yet what *light* is, or what *colours* are, I have not the least conception; although I am, as I have told you, sufficiently convinced, that some such things there are. Now, this relation being (for the substance of it) true, to my own knowledge, or at least (as every man will own it to be) possible and rational, it will evidently follow, without any farther proof, that this man had very good and unquestionable grounds to believe some things that were altogether above his reason; for what sight, light, or colours were, he was utterly incapable of framing or receiving any idea. But yet that there were such things, and that all he heard men discourse about them was not mere fiction, (as he for some time apprehended) was plainly proved to him by such arguments as every reasonable man

must

muſt allow to have been abundantly ſufficient to move his aſſent. Nor was this aſſent of his, which he gave unto theſe things, a bare implicit belief, (§. 11.) as if he had been told that ſomething did exiſt, which was called *Blictri*; but was altogether ignorant of what was ſignified by that word, (as Mr. Toland ſpeaks.) For although it was abſolutely impoſſible for him to frame any direct notion or conception of the things themſelves; yet, by thoſe analogous repreſentations which were made to him of them, he well might be, and was accordingly, not only fully convinced, that what was ſpoken concerning them was not inſignificant nonſenſe; but alſo enabled to frame ſome ſort of repreſentative conception of them, which is more than a man can do of *Blictri*; of which he hears only the ſound, but knows not the ſignification. For, ſuppoſing a man, at the very time of his birth, to be utterly deprived of his organs of ſight; yet, by the uſe of his other four ſenſes, he may well conceive what a faculty of ſenſation is, and how a ſenſible quality,

quality, or the ſmall particles of matter flowing or rebounding from a body, and ſtriking upon the proper organ of ſenſe, do make ſuch a peculiar impreſſion upon it, as to affect our underſtanding with ſome particular knowledge of the body itſelf, whereby we are enabled to diſtinguiſh it from other bodies. And as he can directly apply all this to the ſenſes of hearing, ſmelling, taſting, and touching, of which he may be as good or a better maſter than other men; ſo, by way of analogy, from theſe ſenſes he will be able to make ſome imperfect ſort of repreſentation to himſelf, what ſort of thing ſight is, and what light and colours are; though directly and particularly he knows no more of them, than if he had never heard of them. Sir Kenelm Digby, in his treatiſe of bodies, chap. xxviii. tells us of a Spaniſh nobleman, who was born ſo abſolutely deaf, that if a gun were ſhot off cloſe by his ear, he could not hear it; and yet was taught to ſpeak very diſtinctly; and, by the motion of any man's mouth, ſo perfectly to underſtand what he ſaid,

ſaid, as that he would not loſe a word in a whole day's converſation. Now, the doctrine of ſounds and muſick muſt of neceſſity have been as much above this man's reaſon, as that of light and colours was above the blind man's, of whom I but now ſpoke; and yet there might very good aſſurance have been given to the one, that there was ſuch a ſenſe as hearing and ſuch a thing as a ſound, as well as there was unto the other in the caſe of light and colours.

XV. And now to apply what has been ſaid to the controverſy concerning the Trinity, and Incarnation of our Saviour. And here the iſſue, which I am now trying, preſuppoſes theſe three things: firſt, that the texts of Scripture, which are brought to prove the truth of theſe doctrines, are ſufficient for the purpoſe for which they are alleged, if we interpret them according to the natural order and uſual ſignification of the words and expreſſions of them. Secondly, that the doctrines themſelves are not contrary to reaſon,

reaſon, as not implying any contradiction; ſee Part II. §. 22. But, thirdly, that they are altogether above our reaſon, becauſe we cannot frame any notion or idea of that particular union and diſtinction, which is between the three perſons of the bleſſed Trinity, or between the two natures, which are in our Lord Jeſus Chriſt. Which three things being taken for granted, the queſtion that is to be determined, is, whether or no it be a ſufficient ground for a man to deny his aſſent to the doctrines of the Trinity, and Incarnation of Chriſt, becauſe they are above his reaſon?

XVI. And here, in the firſt place, it is very plain, that although we cannot by any means comprehend the things themſelves, yet we do ſo far underſtand the meaning of the terms, in which theſe doctrines are expreſſed, as clearly to perceive, that they are not a company of inſignificant words put together to make a ſound, and ſignify nothing. What a *perſon* is, we know; though we cannot tell what

ſort

ſort of perſons the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghoſt are; and how their perſonal diſtinction between themſelves particularly and fully differs from that of men, one from another. What it is to be *one*, we well underſtand; although we cannot frame an idea of that ſpecial union, which is between thoſe divine Perſons. What it is for one being to *generate* another, and what to *proceed* from another, we are not ignorant; although the peculiar manner of the generation of the Son of God, and the proceſſion of the Holy Ghoſt, be beyond our capacity to conceive. And, laſtly, what it is for two beings to be *united* together, we can very well apprehend; although we pretend not to know the manner of that union, which is between the two natures in the perſon of Jeſus Chriſt. From whence it plainly follows, that theſe doctrines, though *above our reaſon*, do yet ſo far ſtand upon equal terms with thoſe doctrines which I have termed *reconcileable to reaſon*, §. 8. that as our reaſon may be plainly and poſitively convinced from its own principles alone, of

of the *poſſibility* of the one; ſo is there no principle of our reaſon, which can reach ſo far as to prove or demonſtrate any *impoſſibility* in the other. And where there is no contradiction or impoſſibility in a doctrine, it will undeniably follow, that that ſame doctrine may poſſibly be true. And wherever a man is convinced of the poſſibility of a doctrine, if the truth of that ſame doctrine appears to him to be teſtified by any perſon, of whoſe veracity he cannot entertain any manner of doubt, he cannot refuſe to give his aſſent to it; as I have ſaid, §. 13. Since then the veracity of God admits of no manner of doubt, and the holy Scriptures are by both parties in this diſpute allowed of, as moſt authentic records of the doctrines of faith, and rules of life, which God has made known and revealed to the world; and laſtly, ſince we here ſuppoſe, that the doctrine of the Trinity, and that of the Incarnation of Chriſt, do neither of them contain or imply any impoſſibility or contradiction, although they are both of them above our reaſon; it will follow,

follow, that if all or any of the texts of Scripture, which are brought to prove theſe doctrines, being expounded according to the common way of interpreting all books, (of which ſee Part I. §. 25.) do fairly, and without being wreſted, contain, either in themſelves, or their evident conſequences, thoſe ſame doctrines which they are alleged to eſtabliſh, there can be no juſt cauſe why any man ſhould deny his aſſent to them. But if, notwithſtanding all this, it be ſtill urged, that it is not poſſible for a man explicitly to believe a thing, of which he can frame no conception or idea; I muſt refer him to the ſtory of the blind man, §. 14. which ſeems to me abundantly to evince the contrary. And why we ſhould not believe the doctrines of the Trinity and Incarnation, upon the teſtimony of the holy Scriptures, as well as the blind man did the exiſtence of light and colours, upon the teſtimony of other men, joined with that collateral experiment which I have mentioned, I profeſs I can ſee no manner of reaſon.

XVII.

XVII. And as in my book, Part III. §. 71. I have advertiſed my reader, that I have purpoſely avoided the uſe of certain words and terms, for the reaſon there given; ſo muſt I deſire him to take notice, that, for the like reaſon, I have, both in my book and in this Appendix, omitted ſo much as to mention the word *myſtery*, about which ſo great a noiſe has of late been made. Whether this ſame term *myſtery* be always uſed in the New Teſtament, in the very ſame (and no other) ſignification, as it is underſtood by heathen authors; or whether other ſorts of things, by a very allowable analogy, are not alſo there called myſteries, upon account of their obſcurity, becauſe *we know them but in part, and ſee* them but *as in a glaſs darkly*; or laſtly, whether there be any thing in Chriſtianity, which may *properly* be called a *myſtery*, according to the genuine meaning of that term, to me ſeems to be no more but a contention *about a word*, which the Apoſtle expreſsly forbids, 2 Tim. ii. 14. But whatever may be determined concerning the propriety

of the word, the thing itſelf ſeems to me to be very evident, that there are ſome doctrines in Chriſtianity, which are above our reaſon, and yet that this is no ſufficient ground for the denial of our aſſent to them.

XVIII. And if I am told, that, after all this, there is no greater obſcurity in any of the doctrines of Chriſtianity, than what there is in all natural beings, with which we moſt familiarly converſe; whoſe *real eſſence* we cannot penetrate, but muſt content ourſelves with a ſort of ſuperficial knowledge of them, which is cauſed by thoſe impreſſions, which they make upon our outward organs; which, at moſt, can be termed but a *nominal eſſence*; ſo that even *a ſpire of graſs*, *a ſtick*, *a ſtone*, or any other natural being, may, upon this account, as truly be termed *myſterious*, as the moſt ſublime doctrines of Religion; I ſhall only anſwer, that it mightily raiſes my wonder, to hear men ſo freely acknowledge, that in every other thing whatſoever there is ſomething which is above

above their reaſon, and to which their underſtanding cannot reach; and yet, that they will not allow the ſame in Religion.

XIX. But I know it will be objected, that the firſt of thoſe three ſuppoſitions, which I have laid down, §. 15. will by no means be granted by the Unitarians; for they are ſo far from allowing the texts of Scripture, which are brought to prove the doctrines of the Trinity and Incarnation, to be any way ſufficient to that purpoſe, that, on the contrary, they do, with the greateſt aſſurance, undertake to bring other and contrary interpretations of thoſe very paſſages, which they pretend to be far more rational and natural. To which I ſhall only anſwer, that this is all that I aim at in this Appendix, that the iſſue of theſe controverſies may be placed upon that, which is the only true foundation for it; I mean the authority of the holy Scriptures; and that blind men would not take upon them, by the ſtrength of their reaſon, to diſcuſs problems, and frame concluſions concerning light and colours,

colours, of which they can have no true or ſufficient idea. I am very ſenſible that learned men, who have their minds ſtrongly prepoſſeſſed with any opinion, may, by their criticiſms and paraphraſes, and ſuch like engines, torture and ſcrew almoſt any text of Scripture, till they make it look with another aſpect from what is truly its own, and ſeem to confeſs what really it never thought or meant. But if we would always take thoſe interpretations which flow of themſelves, and not thoſe which are violently preſſed from the Scripture, (which I think is the faireſt way of expounding all ſpeeches and diſcourſes whatſoever) I cannot, for my part, ſee how we can otherwiſe conclude, concerning the doctrines of the Trinity and Incarnation, than as I have done, Part II. §. 22. 37.

THE END.